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TRANSACTIONS OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY

General Editor: S C DUBE

Studies in Indian and Asian Civilizations

Editor : S C Malik

DISSENT PROTEST AND REFORM IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION

Edited by
S C Malik

Indian Institute of Advanced Study,
Simla

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Preface

This volume brings together a number of papers presented and discussed at a seminar organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. They present a multifaceted and trans-disciplinary approach towards understanding the dynamics of change in Indian society.

From time to time there have been powerful movements that have questioned the assumptions underlying the Indian social system and have challenged the prevailing social order. In this book some of these movements have been examined in a wide historical perspective; others have been treated as case studies in a micro sociological framework. The approach in the papers as well as in their discussion has been critical and inter-disciplinary. Of necessity the discussion part has had to be condensed, for it would have been difficult and expensive to publish the full transcript of a lively, free flowing, and wide ranging dialogue. It is our hope that this selective and summary presentation preserves something of the flavour of the debate.

The Institute is grateful to the participants who contributed valuable papers and enriched the discussions with their insights. With commendable industry and imagination the rapporteurs kept a full record of the discussions. The volume was edited by Dr S C Malik, Fellow of the Institute. I wish to record my appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered by Mr M C Gabriel and Mr N C Chatterjee. Mr Gabriel patiently copy-edited the volume and Mr Chatterjee took charge of its production.

It is my hope that this volume will stimulate interest in the study of social movements in India. The importance of the book lies as much in the presentation of substantive materials as in its contribution to the sharpening of approaches and refinement of methodology.

S C DUBE
Director

1 March 1977

Indian Institute of Advanced Study

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S C Malik

Introduction

THE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN STUDYING A CIVILIZATION SUCH AS THE INDIAN are self-evident, not only because of the diversity of facets but also because of the many hundreds of years it spans. To characterize its various developments in space and time under a single unitary label or even to picture them under one dominant theme such as religion, economics, caste, etc., is not valid. Even in the case of specific subsystems there is a great diversity as when we deal with caste and religion. The difficulty is not of mere quantitative coverage which is stupendous; it is also one of evolving frames of reference which are meaningful, relevant and acceptable to different specialists. The question therefore, is, how do we describe the numerous—almost infinite—varieties of practices and beliefs, social structures, land owning patterns, personal law and kinship systems, and still communicate the essential common elements which interrelate making them typical of that civilization?

Civilizations have been studied for many generations, and answers to such questions have been given in many ways. For instance, under the immediate impact of Darwinism human societies were classified in terms of the biological principle of natural selection. This resulted in a quest for locating and studying such non-European societies as would exemplify various 'natural' stages in the history of mankind. Along with systematic ethnographies of 'smaller' societies, it also led to the investigation of Greek, Egyptian, and Chinese civilizations. For example such approaches as those of Gibbon, Spengler, and more recently Toynbee, presumed that civilizations had a definite life and death cycles similar to that of an individual organism. In fact, this idea has its roots in the 18th century and some even earlier universal histories. The history of such studies is a long one, and only some of the relevant conceptual assumptions of such studies may be mentioned here:

1. *Evolutionist and Progress assumptions*—these stress predominantly the technological criteria of material progress;
2. *Non-evolutionist definitions*—these include such viewpoints which consider truth, beauty, adventure, art and peace as chief characteristics—qualities—

of a civilized society; including views which characterize India by its spirituality, or other moral judgements;

3. *Organic viewpoints*—these consider civilization in terms of life cycles, of youth, manhood, old age, and death;

4. *Levels of integration*—as when a civilization is viewed in terms of various cultural systems at high levels of integration in such fields as science, philosophy, and art; when one considers civilization in terms of the integration of folk and urban cultures, and the interaction of high and low traditions; or when the view of civilization is in terms of as a 'super style' or a 'way of life'. For example, from the viewpoint of art and intellectual activities the *Upanishadic* period will be a climax that led to the development of Buddhist and other heretical religions around 500 B.C. Again a comparable phenomenon may be seen in the Gupta period (traditional 'Golden Period') from A.D. 400 to 600.

Apart from these recent studies it is well known that observations by outsiders about Indian society have been recorded since the third century B.C., especially by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantine Jews, and the Chinese. These foreign accounts are known to have increased rapidly from A.D. 1000 onwards with the coming of the Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and Persians. However, most classical accounts of Indian society follow Megasthenes, who had the advantage of direct observation of Indian society. But his observations were mainly of urban political centres. Roman accounts are mainly geographic in nature. Arab accounts follow the classical view of mentioning seven classes of Indian society. Later 17th century accounts tend to give the Mughal court version of political and commercial matters. Thus, the goals of all these early historical accounts depended upon the viewpoint of the times.

The establishment of British suzerainty during the 18th century brought into focus three major approaches to the study of Indian society; the orientalist, the administrative and the missionary.

The orientalist had uncritically accepted the textual view of Indian society, which was considered to be timeless and static; the statements from the classical texts of the 3rd century were valid for the eighteenth century Indian society. Thus, there was no regional variation in this view, so that no questions were asked about the relationship between prescriptive normative statements derived from the texts and the actual behaviour of individuals and groups. Today, this stereotype, that every Hindu follows the textual rules, seems to continue to haunt not only the academic but also the layman.

The missionary view was at the opposite end to the orientalist's because it condemned Hindu society outright in order to destroy the social basis of Hinduism. But, indirectly, it contributed a great deal to the initiation of empirical studies of Indian society. Nevertheless, it was firmly believed that Indian society had always been corrupt, degraded, and full of contradictions.

There was the third official view of Indian society which was based on the information collected by each administrator on caste, village, family, etc. It

suggested that unchanging India lay in the villages and in their social organization. This view was later incorporated by the nationalists of the early twentieth century to suggest that prior to the coming of the British, India was well off, and was reasonably democratically governed at the village level. In a way, this view is similar to that of the orientalist who had admired India's religion and civilization as mentioned in the ancient texts, and thought that India had fallen from a 'golden age'.

By the 19th century Indians had acquired a new outlook which transcended the limited outlook of the British, and a new consciousness about the identity and image of the motherland. With the nationalist viewpoint emerged a new political awareness, accompanied by complementary economic processes. These developments formed the basis for the search of an identity, which was sought in an interpretation of the Indian heritage and this amounted to an idealization of the past. In many ways, this nostalgia preserved in the new intelligentsia reflected many of the old feudalistic attitudes, and a revivalism which boosted vested interests rather than highlight the general misery of the masses. Of course, the view of a changed future did exist among the new Western educated intellectual class, who also welcomed European science and technology, but they continued to hold a mystical faith in India's past and a 'spiritual' future for the nation. One of the reasons why the early writings by Indians in the 19th century idealized India's past is that these reconstructions almost entirely relied on classical textual sources. This partial view representing only certain sections of society, in some ways continues to influence our research even today, e.g., the notion that caste is a rigid system of stratification of society that has remained almost intact for many centuries. Current research tells us that this view is not tenable any longer.

In any case, the nineteenth century views point which evolved with the emergence of Indian nationalism, gave the discipline of 'Indology' a pride of place in academic research. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that professional historians, properly trained, began to emerge. But in most of these researches, political, social and economic 'facts' were stressed within 'equilibrium' models. This helped to maintain the status quo of upper classes, rather than understand change which would give impetus to the growth of egalitarian and democratic ideas. However, since Independence, a scientific re-interpretation and recovery of India's traditional culture has received official approval. Following this current historical research seeks to understand various processes by analyzing political, social, and economic institutions. Thus, for example, attempts are made to understand caste or *jati* by its interactions with reference to guilds, village councils, etc., rather than merely by a study of dynastic powers; attempts are also being made to understand political authority, even in its routine functions, within a wider framework of socio-economics.

However, despite this new trend, there have come to stay many myths about India: of a religious and lethargic society; of 'golden' or 'dark' ages, and so

on—all these have inhibited a correct understanding of Indian society. As a consequence of following these outdated approaches Indian history by and large continues, like European history, to be divided into three major periods associating each of these with a particular religious emphasis. This overlooks the fact that religion is only one of the factors which have shaped or motivated stability or change in Indian history. In view of all these it is essential to re-orient Indian historical studies within a social science perspective. This is necessary in order to remove earlier inadequacies of interpretations by bringing methodology in line with present time, and to place Indian history and civilization in its correct perspective.

Until recently, anthropology had mainly investigated out-of-the-way non-European 'small' societies. It was thought that such micro-examinations would enable one to understand the larger problems of the 'whole' as well as that of cultural evolution. There were two other main reasons for such studies. It was expected that by such studies, 1. the non-industrial tribal societies would disclose the stages through which the advanced industrial society must have passed, and 2. one could identify motivations which kept these societies 'stagnant' and whose replacement would take them forward along the lines followed by the advanced societies. A later derived reason was to assert the congenital character of backwardness and the opposition of these societies to any effort at the introduction of modern institutions.

Anthropologists have also felt that plural societies may be studied by elaborate techniques of field investigations, in a manner similar to studying traditional 'small' societies. But both these attempts often resulted in a patchwork of elements without any apparent overall pattern. At any rate, we know that the issue is not as simple. The methodological difficulties of dealing with non-literate societies are relatively minor as compared to the study of large aggregates of subcultures and subsocieties called civilizations. A proper perspective to such studies has been brought in by challenging the classical universalistic, unique, and absolutistic assumptions and beliefs. Modern anthropology has gone beyond descriptive analyses to develop explicit techniques and systematic theories. Of course, it continues to use such descriptive accounts as are available in historical documents, evidences from archaeological field-work, ethnographic details, etc. This vast information is today analyzed to explain processes, and to focus attention on various dimensions of research methodology and theoretical problems.

In sociology, not much attention has been given to the study of complex national and supernational groups as such, although there do exist several specialized fields which intensively study economics, politics, religions, law, art, demography, and history. Nevertheless, in the total study of nations or civilizations the emphasis has been two-fold. The first is the relativist or historical view which attempts to examine basic civilizational epochs within which sociological laws and typology have general validity. The second is one of

general systematics which attempts to define the framework for research, typology, and theories, as may be applicable to the different eras of civilizations. Although in their approaches these two indicate different levels rather than branches of research, yet they suggest the existence of a division in the areas of historians and anthropologists.

In India, in the early years, anthropological research was closely interlinked to historical research. The main trends, in summary, until the end of World War I were : 1. A humanist tradition which emphasized the relationships between textual study and static models of contemporary Indian society; 2. Indian society seen as a collection of different entities whose traditions could be classified and studied separately, such as of caste, rituals, village, art and crafts. (e.g., villages were regarded as self-sufficient, stable, and unchanging, with caste as the central institution that governed Indian behaviour and values); 3. Economic study of villages with some interrelationship shown with social structure; and 4. Tribal studies. By the end of World War II, the entire orientation of anthropology, its methods, theories and even subject-matter was transformed by a conscious research effort throughout the world. The beginnings of this transformation may be seen during the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the works of Rivers and Radcliffe-Brown.

Beginning from 1906 until 1952, the bulk of anthropological research in India consisted of descriptive anthropology and speculative ethnology. But after 1952, conceptually and methodologically sound models were evolved to rectify earlier views. No one now takes the basic social units of family, caste, and village as structural or cultural isolates. Rather, one sees them as networks of various kinds, and even the caste system has been related to the great traditional structures, as represented in *Dharmashastras* and other historical texts. The structural-functional relationships of religion and politics to social structure, and of economics and language to social structure have also been examined. Social change as an organization of structural and cultural traditions, as well as the concept of social mobility in terms of social hierarchy, ritual purity, and pollution, has been accepted and made use of in various studies. But many anthropologists continue to use equilibrium-adjustment models, considering these as adequate explanations of various processes. While others, since linear transformations as such are not possible, they use such concepts as universalization and parochialization. Nevertheless, emphasis on 'conflict-tension' models, or the structuralist approach, in terms of function-dysfunction, are not being used, relatively speaking, sufficiently.

Anthropologists have also realized that examination of such subsystems as villages, castes, etc., is a necessity, since these may then be correlated into the wider setting of a civilization, i.e., micro-studies are useful as points of reference against which different aspects of a *total* society and culture may be examined. But historians have yet to investigate structural relationships of sub-societies and subcultures (subsystems), both spatially and temporally. For example, the repeated emergence of some form of 'protest' or 'reformist'

movements of Brahmanical Hinduism and their re-incorporation into the general socio-cultural structure is a characteristic Indian phenomenon of long standing. These and other processes may be further studied within the overall structural pattern. Thus, these methodological standpoints may enable the sequences of facts and events from historical to the modern, to be examined in a comparative manner by seeking out the repetitive social and cultural processes that have existed through time and space. In other words, it is essential to examine systematically structural patterns and ideas which underlie events, roles of individuals, and thought patterns available from the main sources of historical writings.

These difficult problems of understanding complex civilizations are faced equally by historians, anthropologists and sociologists, since neither an enormous amount of the cataloguing of cultural data nor the division of society into artifacts, sociofacts, or mentifacts, give us insights about the form of a particular societal or cultural configuration. For this purpose, we may have to seek levels of social and cultural integration in the many categories of sub-systems since civilizations may be constituted by a relatively homogeneous to a mixture of varied subcultures and subsocieties that are bound together through several interactional spheres and institutions. Moreover, as in the case of India, the less such integration, the more difficult it is to see a national character or a basic personality, since only a few people have any idea of nationhood. Therefore, as a nation approaches greater socio-cultural integration, the more perceptibly national character and basic personalities will begin to be formed. In other words, a total view of a 'patterned whole' results from a framework of a hierarchy of different evaluations and levels of integration.

Consequently, complex socio-cultural systems (whether modern or ancient, and their products) cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed in terms of information obtained from any single area, i.e., in isolation from the integral context even if it may not be possible to specify all the networks involved. Systematic interrelationships, consistencies and processes of socio-cultural institutions may then better enable us to explain larger patterns, rather than by mere super-structural values, attitudes and other like elements. Hence, a bare statement of society and culture or handling problems at the normative level will not help us to understand complex systems, for these comprise heterogeneous entities that are intricately interrelated. In this sense, even to look for a national 'Indian' culture is to pose a false problem, because national institutions have to be distinguished from socio-cultural segments, each having its own level of socio-cultural integration. Schemes of socio-cultural integration may also be developed, as at the level of religion which may be interrelated with economic, social and cultural subsystems. In other words, systematic analyses will help us to understand different processes, and to search for laws or regularities which are valid for cross-cultural purposes. For example, the following questions may be asked in this context:

1. Can civilizations be viewed as a system, and, if so, a system of what sort and with what degree of integration and equilibrium?
2. To what extent is a basic assumption of conflict a more appropriate departure for our analysis?
3. What are the fundamental aspects of change, and the most fruitful way of analyzing them?
4. Can one speak meaningfully of a finite number of prerequisites for a civilization, and, in their absence, of its decline or death?
5. Are there crucial socio-cultural institutions more necessary for the maintenance of a system than others; if so, what are they? And, so on.

In short, using the concept of systemness, a civilization may be defined both in terms of a maximal as well as a minimal interdependence of the subsystems, i.e., if in a system its elements are highly interdependent, then each may be considered to possess low functional autonomy; conversely, a system may be composed of parts which derive but little satisfaction of their needs from each other and that would suggest high functional autonomy. The former would suggest the strength of centripetal forces in India, whereas the latter the assertions of centrifugal or regional forces, such as of Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and Panjab. Of course, the total system itself, straining towards integration, may be expected to seek submission of the parts to the requirements of the position they occupy.

Consequently, this kind of conceptualization of systemness, both in terms of autonomy and functional inter-dependence enables us to deal with the problems of conflict-tension producing relationships—such as Centre-State relations—that have not been symmetrical and have existed throughout the history of Indian political systems. It will also help us to understand that the more the system (the nation-today) strives to satisfy its subsystems (regional areas), the more tension it may generate since this impairs the functional autonomy of the parts. If this is the case then the system itself may have to inhibit its own tendencies towards wholeness if it is to remain stable. But in the name of national integration, research analyses have ignored these tension problems and of the functional autonomy of the subsystem, i.e., to treat Indian civilization as a flexible one which strives towards a federalizing balance between totalitarian and anarchist limits. Our major problem is how do we conceive of a civilization as an integrated entity? So far, the main method has been to discuss civilizations as large cultural entities, i.e., to consider culture and civilization as co-extensive. But this has not helped us in integrating various levels of such civilizations which consist of several subsocieties and sub-cultures. At any rate, all these various historical and socio-anthropological approaches suggest not only the interests of the scholars but also the diversity of Indian civilization.

Today, our concern has to be not only for selecting specific symbols of social and cultural traditions in order to seek an identity for a new concept of 'nationality'—including a concern with national integration—but also for finding a

frame of reference to understand what this national identity is. This viewpoint is not a biased ideological orientation. Our very attempt to seek a structural pattern of Indian civilization is the result of a self-consciousness, of a reflection of changing concepts of national identity that is specially associated with future planning. This is how the past, present, and the future are interwoven into each, in an existential manner, that is, "a civilization is both a process of becoming, as well as a state of being, rather than a tradition or traditions that have been handed down to us by our ancestors". In any case, whatever this Indian heritage and tradition be, it cannot be taken for granted since new traditions are always created by an interaction of culture and society.

To illustrate, one of the themes in the study of Indian civilization which has not been emphasized enough is that of "the tradition of dissent, protest and reform". Why this is important is because for some years now it has been felt that in investigating continuity and change—both as long-term and short-term perspectives—the currently available static or equilibrium models have proved inadequate in providing explanations for understanding Indian history and civilization. Their use as explanatory models, for example, gives the impression of this civilization as an unchanging one in which, by and large, orthodox traditions have dominated—especially because there has been an unquestioning acceptance of normative/prescriptive value systems. Today, current social science research tells us that in understanding a live, continuous, complex, heterogenous, ancient civilization such as India—a total system which comprises several subcultures and subsocieties (each often having radically different traditions)—harmony and equilibrium do not give a correct perspective. For, not only have explanations to be in terms of different levels of integration, but also we have to take into account conflict, tension, contradiction processes and like situations which help to explain the long continuity by processes of change of this civilization to maintain its continuity.

Thus, such hypotheses as chiefly depend upon notions of harmonious and equilibrium states of human societies, as explanations of processes of change, are insufficient especially when, apart from spatio-temporal factors, a host of other factors have to be taken into account. Therefore, disharmonies and discontinuities are extremely important in understanding change and the growth of a civilization. This is where protest, dissent and reform movements have played a critical role and need serious in-depth historical examination at a multi-disciplinary level. In this context in India for example, since earlier models gave undue emphasis to the unqualified acceptance of the ideological or normative patterns, it was thought that the notion of hierarchy was generally accepted without any alternate systems of changeover being seriously considered. This hierarchical order is considered to be central to the social system in general but more so to the broad category designated as 'Hinduism'. (There is perhaps a roughly similar system in such other socio-cultural groups as Christians and Muslims living in India).

Today, empirical studies as well as newer concepts have brought into focus

the fact that in India, from time to time, the fundamentals of socio-cultural structure have definitely been questioned with attempts to provide alternate categories. Thus, not only was the hierarchy idea prevalent in the wide-ranging socio-cultural system questioned but even other ideas, such as egalitarianism, were also practised and preached. A major consequence of such movements was that these *non-conformist* ideas manifested themselves in various ways in the socio-cultural, economic and value-systems. The significant contributions of *radical* or heterodox ideas therefore appear to be in terms of the corrections they provided to the various imbalances created at particular points of time thereby rectifying the inadequacies of the prevailing traditions.

In the context of the above theme, we may understand Indian society with special reference to its ability or otherwise to generate orthogenic movements in order to facilitate adjustments to changing social realities. But apart from problems of definitions and terminologies, a movement's *how* and *why*, in terms of civilizational developments, both from the sociological and historical viewpoints, need to be thoroughly examined along with correlating these investigations with problems of *when* and *where*. As an instance of seeking causes, it is commonly known that many of these movements were religious in nature. But the socio-economic context which was in the background requires detailed examination due both to immediate or long-term reasons at the economic, political and technological levels. The initial focus, then again, for their origin may be located within the subsystems or in certain acculturative processes provided by non-indigenous systems. On the other hand, from the Marxian view point, the problem of the recurrence of 'protest' and 'dissent' may be simply explained as a dialectical process whereby an accepted tradition or thesis inevitably generates disagreement or an antithesis to provide a synthesis. We have to seek out, "perceived injustices and inadequacies; their objectives; their appeal and spread; mobilization and sustenance mechanisms, patterns of objectives and goal transfers; social effects; assessment of successes and failures and so forth". In short, investigations have to be formulated and explored within clear basic frameworks with the help of various socio-anthropological generalizations, both before and after locating specific source material—empirical data—from different parts of the country.

In order to identify major (macro) and minor (micro) movements at the empirical level these movements may be identified in a wide range of activities; such as in literary and oral traditions, in artistic and intellectual spheres—all these representing symbolic forms of indirect protests against traditional order and authority—apart from explicit socio-religious protests, dissents, etc., that begin with a group of people or individuals either as a result of fundamental, intellectual or philosophical disagreement or, indirectly, due to economic, political or even technological reasons. Here, several questions need to be asked like: What do we mean by a 'social' movement? Is it really socio-religious? Do such 'protests', 'dissents' always encompass wide classes of society? Or are they often restricted to philosophical debates? Do we cover both

individual and mass protest under the same heading or separate headings? But how do we differentiate those that begin in one subsystem, such as in the religious one, and ultimately become socio-political or politico-economic movements, even effecting technological spheres? Alternatively, what role did technology and economics play in bringing about socio-cultural change, or even a political one in terms of rebellion or rejection of established orders? There are thus several questions on the basis of which we may consider our discussions for further research on the theme of "Dissent, Protest, and Reform Movements in Indian Civilization".

One of the projects for group research at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study is "A Sourcebook of Indian and Asian Civilizations". During the Fourth Plan period three monographs were prepared under this scheme, which dealt with the themes of : 1. *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Indian Civilization*; 2. *Brahmanic Ritual Traditions*; and 3. *Transmission of the Mahabharata Tradition*. During the first half of the Fifth Plan period it was decided to take up one theme for multi-disciplinary treatment. This was "The Tradition of Dissent, Protest, and Reform in Indian Civilization". The importance of this theme has been stated above.

To initiate work on this theme, a Planning Conference was organized in September 1974 when experts from different parts of India, as well as scholars at the Institute, were invited to participate. The primary aim of the Conference was to chalk out a programme of interdisciplinary studies and also to plan a Seminar to be held in the following year. Consequently a one-week Seminar was held at the Institute from the 1st to the 8th of September 1975, with the purpose of examining in depth such movements as are variously labelled dissent, protest, reform, non-conformist, and so on, in Indian Civilization. About forty-five historians, philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists from different academic institutions and research organizations participated in the Seminar.

The deliberations of this Seminar have resulted in this book which incorporates the major papers on various themes and their discussions. The papers are not comprehensive in their coverage of either the topics dealt with or the areas or period covered. This was only to be expected since the main object of the Seminar was to focus attention on the theme and so enable further in-depth studies to be undertaken. Fifteen topics have already been assigned to various scholars for detailed examination based on field and library work.

The success of the Seminar and its proceedings as presented here is due to the keen interest evinced by all the participants, both those who wrote papers and those who took part in the discussions. Among those who helped in conducting the Seminar are Y B Damle, S C Dube, J S Grewal, Ravinder Kumar, G Parvathamma, M S A Rao, Sachchidanand, N Sanjeevi, K J Shah,

and A A Suroor who chaired various sessions. We are grateful to them and to the rapporteurs —Arun Bali, S C Bajpai, Suraj Bhan, A R Khan, Vinita Lal, S Hasan Mehmood, B N Saraswati and Suresh Sharma. Professor S C Dube, Director of the Institute, had a pivotal role in determining the conceptual framework of this seminar. He was intimately associated with its planning and organisation at every stage and his initiative and inspiration have contributed in a large measure to its success.

To us at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study this Seminar was a positive and stimulating experience. The papers brought together in this volume, along with some of the comments and interventions, partially capture the flavour of the dialogue at Simla. It is our hope that this volume will stimulate discussion and generate new perspectives towards understanding of Indian Civilization.

S C Dube

Keynote Address

WE ARE PARTNERS IN AN INTELLECTUAL ADVENTURE WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE, hopefully, towards correction of distortions in our social perspectives and lead to a healthy self-awareness. We have not gathered here only to destroy certain myths that have persisted over time, nor yet to generate any new myths which may serve the needs of the present at the risk of injury to truth. Our quest is to look critically at Indian society in an evolutionary perspective both in respect of continuity and change. It will be our endeavour to locate the values and symbol systems that have contributed to the maintenance of our identity and self-image, but we are anxious, at the same time, also to examine the dynamics of change with special focus on the imbalances and disharmonies in our society and the action mechanisms set into motion to correct them. We start with no presuppositions or predispositions and are not at all interested in arriving at a preconceived consensus. Stated simply, our objective is a balanced appraisal of the dynamics of Indian society. If any of the basic postulates of the society have survived we wish to analyze the causes of their stability. If, on the other hand, from time to time there have been redefinitions of social objectives and cultural goals and shifts in the instrumentalities adopted for their realization, we wish to examine the factors behind them as well as their consequences for the society in relation to the present and the future.

There is little doubt that the study of dissent and protest will help us also to understand the solidity and persistence of certain aspects of tradition. We are conscious that no society can lay claims to an unchanging character. A tradition-directed society may be posited as an ideal type but its empirical exemplification would be exceedingly difficult. Forces from within and without make a powerful impact on it. It has to respond to imbalances within and to challenges from outside. The corpus of beliefs, values, and institutional and instrumental systems that go by the name of tradition thus undergoes change. Our accent will be on such change with special emphasis on social forces generated within the society that posed challenges to the structural

continuity and suggested alternative modes necessitating minor or major restructuring of the normative order.

Every society has an identity and a self-image. The attributes by which it identifies itself may not be the same as the attributes by which the world outside identifies it. The image that others have of the society can be very different from the one that the society has of itself. The people's assumptions and beliefs about themselves are important for they inform the set of goals that the society seeks to attain and the system of meanings that are implicit in its cognitive system. Native categories of thought and the meanings that the people themselves give are important. These are derived from historical experiences, philosophical speculation, and consciously or subconsciously offered rationale of the institutional system. The articulation of these normative premises may be uneven and the strength of belief in them in different segments of the population and in the different strata may not be the same. In any case there is some consensus in regard to a self-conception which contributes substantially to the cohesion of the society. However, there is often a considerable gap between what a people think they are and what they actually are. The ideals are always on the horizon but in operational terms people do not set their sights on the highest and the noblest; in more pragmatic terms they concentrate on the feasible and the attainable. Looking at the Indian civilization, on the one hand, we have the vision of the Great Tradition which is inspired by majestic philosophy and near perfect ordering of social relations within an idealized framework. This is the kind of model that we get out of the sacred texts, philosophical treatises, and works outlining the normative order of society. On the other hand, a close look at the different local and regional traditions gives us a microscopic view of life as it is actually lived. In such profiles one gets faint tones of the high philosophy which is considerably modified by the exigencies of mass illiteracy and poverty. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* do not and cannot percolate to the masses. A version of their content reaches down to them by texts of popular Hinduism and through carriers of tradition who use the folk idiom and the folk media. The sacred texts thus do not have living links with living social contexts. Through multi-level and multi-channel transmission their meanings get transformed. In fact the Little Traditions may have reverence for some of the great works and their key ideas, but what they actually believe in comes through varied filters of cultural reinterpretation. The actual lives of the people at this level are often guided by streams of thought that may have their origin in radical departures from what is explicitly stated or implicitly assumed in the great works. The communication channels that bridge the Great and the Little Traditions are insufficiently understood. We often start with a model implicit in the Great Tradition and try to view the Little Traditions in this framework. I suggest that this model is of limited validity and utility. A more relevant model could be derived from the intermediate traditions; the latter to be understood both in the chronological sense and in the sense

that it stands as a bridge between abstract philosophy and the common man's beliefs. These forms have been neglected.

Although one may say with some justification that in the last few decades the social sciences have been given to excessive model building, one cannot deny that models are essential tools in the craftsmanship of the social scientist. But model building has to be done with care for the tendency to seek uniformity and regularity often encourages overlooking or even suppression of inconvenient aspects. Hindu society has been understood as one having the attributes of ascription and hierarchy sustained by rigid application of the complex rules of purity and pollution. It has often been characterized as otherworldly in the sense that it underplays material considerations and emphasizes spirituality. A certain degree of timelessness has been ascribed to it and the more orthodox continue to describe it as founded on *Sanatana Dharma*. The tradition is believed to be automatic in its self-perpetuation. This view ignores the category of the deriders of the *Vedas*—*Vedanindic*—and the various heretical sects. It also rationalizes and justifies several major transgressions of *dharma* by those who had the manipulative capacity to influence the interpreters of tradition. The sacred lore carries weighty evidence of this. In emphasizing ascriptive hierarchy we often forget some required deviations which question the fundamental assumptions of the system. How does the conventional model of Hinduism explain the complex of beliefs and practices associated with Puri? It is well-known that within the limits of his capacity and endurance a Hindu should perform pilgrimages to four major centres—Badrinath, Dwarka, Rameswaram, and Puri. All four are equally important but Puri is the terminal point; the circle ends there. Within the sacred zone of the Jagannath Temple observance of pollution and purity, far from being required, is prohibited. To be able to derive merit from pilgrimage to this centre one must obliterate from one's mind the notion of high and low, pure and impure, and *jati* and *varna*. Practising of caste distance and untouchability in action or even in thought is taboo. To do so is to invite divine punishment in the form of a dread disease—leprosy. The *prasad*, among other things, includes plain rice and dal which has to be eaten by all devotees irrespective of any consideration of who cooked it or who is distributing it or who is eating next to you. The sacred round is thus completed in an egalitarian ethos sanctioned both by tradition and religion. Myth and legend suggest that Jagannath himself was chastised by Lakshmi for ignoring devotees of low and depressed status who had claims on him because of their unselfish devotion to him. It looks somewhat incongruous that Lakshmi is not lodged with her mate in the Jagannath Temple. She has deliberately chosen to live with the poor. The celebrated annual chariot festival of Puri symbolizes Jagannath's journey to her in the quarters of the low and the depressed to persuade her to return. She promises to do so only after Jagannath concedes her point by agreeing to allow access to all devotees irrespective of their caste. What is important to know here is that constraints of ascription, hierarchy, and pollution and purity

are completely broken down at this important Hindu shrine, pilgrimage to which, after pilgrimage to the three other seats, ensures redemption of the soul from the chain of death, birth, and rebirth and opens up the gateway to heaven.

The prevalent model ignores the fact that in legitimized local and regional Hinduism several priestly functions are performed not by the Brahman but by the lower castes.

The ritual hierarchy of *varna* and *jati* is exceedingly misleading for it does not reflect the true hierarchy of political power and economic privilege. The Brahman may have had the consolation of having the highest ritual ranking but his interpretation of the sacred texts and their regulations was influenced by the interests and dictates of those who wielded political and economic power. Relative positions in the caste hierarchy have always been in a state of flux: those ascending the scale of political dominance could invariably manage to get a higher ritual and social status. Even in the late 'twenties, in the 'thirties, and in the early 'forties several groups claimed and attained Dwija status with the intervention and blessings of the Brahmans.

The primacy of spirituality appears to have been over-emphasized. The ideal of *moksha* doubtless was present, but there existed alternative paths for its attainment. The hard way was to achieve it by following the prescribed norms, but many people did pick up the softer option of buying it. Less arduous ways and priestly intervention, for a consideration, could produce almost the same results. It is well known that if one could not follow the rigorous path and perform difficult penance one could hire someone else to do it for him. At least a part of the merit accrued to the person who paid someone else for the undertaking.

As far as the timelessness of Hindu tradition goes the validity of all assertions in this respect are open to grave doubt. The acceptance of tradition was neither total nor blind. Hindu legends bear ample testimony to this. It is true that Eklavya was denied the opportunity to learn at the feet of Dronacharya because of his low birth. He was, however, tenacious and persevering. In his mind he had adopted Drona as his teacher, but having been rejected by the latter he made a clay idol of the guru and began learning under the inspiration provided by it. He quietly watched what Drona was teaching his acceptable pupils—the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Quick on the uptake he excelled the rightful pupils. On having attained mastery in the art and science of archery he went to Drona, reverentially touched his feet, and humbly offered to make the traditional gift that a disciple was expected to make to his teacher and mentor. Drona marvelled at the quality of Eklavya's performance, but was deeply disturbed by the transgression of *dharma*. His idol had inspired and trained a person who was not entitled to the learning according to the prevalent norms of the society. To undo the loss of *dharma* he asked for a gift which would incapacitate Eklavya from performing the feats of archery which he had demonstrated. He asked for his right thumb. This was dutifully cut and

gifted to the guru. (One may interpret this legend as the triumph of tradition and as an example of the devotion of a pupil to his teacher.) It may also be cited as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of Hinduism, symbolising the cruelty of the system which prized ascription above achievement. However, there are happier examples which emphasize the primacy of common good over individual's self-interest. Take, for example, the story of the Tamil sage Ramanuja. He was taught a mantra which guaranteed his personal salvation. But this advantage was not unconditional. Betrayal of the secrecy of the mantra meant his being condemned to hell. His dilemma was one of individual good versus collective good. As an act of conscience Ramanuja decided to sacrifice personal salvation to benefit a larger collectivity from his acquisition. He climbed a temple tower and, when sufficient people had gathered around the temple, broke his secrecy and taught the mantra to all who cared to learn it. The many who learned it could be sure of their salvation, although Ramanuja himself was to be damned to the wretchedness and misery of hell. Examples of such acts of conscience are many. Eknath, in Maharashtra, although himself a Brahman, could not see any logic in feeding the overfed Brahmans at the death feast given in honour of his parents. He broke with the tradition and invited and fed the untouchable Mahar and the poor who needed the food more than the Brahmans. The notes of dissent and the acts of protest such as these may not have caught on immediately for the python-like hold of ritual was still strong but they were not always and necessarily voices in the wilderness. Some of them were followed up by mobilization and gathered enough momentum to become movements of considerable force and sizable dimensions.

The normative order was open to doubt and was occasionally questioned seriously. The legitimacy of doctrines was at least subject to varied interpretation and reinterpretation. Individual heretics scoffed at some of the postulates and challenged some of the basic tenets. They had to brave ridicule, censure, and persecution. But rather than yield they decided to pay the price for their beliefs and conviction. In the process they acquired a following. They were important enough at least to merit mention and ridicule in the discourses of the learned champions of orthodoxy. These acts of individual heresy may not have transformed the system but they had enough force to set in motion certain trends of thought and action which had at least an indirect influence on the normative order.

Let me not mislead you into believing that the flow of tradition has been uninterrupted but for minor irritants of inconvenient interpretations and obstinate heresies which were limited in their reach and were generally of low strength in their impact. The ethnicity of those who were brought into the great Hindu tradition asserted itself and their definitions of the situation were often remarkably different from those embodied in the sacred texts. This explains much of the diversity in the local and regional forms of Hinduism. The Great Tradition had to yield to the power of these beliefs and legitimize them

in one form or the other. But the process did not end here. The sanctity of the sacred texts was not equal to the task of resolving the inner contradictions in the society that surfaced from time to time. Nor could it meet the challenges that came from without. In the name of holy tradition the low and the degraded could not for long be expected to accept their lot. They groaned under the inequality and the injustice inherent in the system. There was a ferment among them against the culture of denial and deprivation. This took many activist forms but very few of them rejected the total system. There was a struggle for a more humane, equitable, and just position within the framework. Why should access to God be restricted to the few and denied to the many? Why should there be artificial barriers between man and man in a social system that elevates the few and downgrades the many? Why must certain groups be relegated to a state of permanent degradation? If the upholders of the system were deaf to their murmurs of discontent they had no choice but to be vocal and assertive. It was under such conditions that the initiatives towards new cults and sects were taken. The leadership of these movements, rooted in social discontent, was not in the hands of the upper castes, but in the hands of man of humbler origins. Weavers, cobblers, gardeners, barbers, and others of equally low origin were the motive forces behind these movements. They sprang up at different periods in different parts of the country and made a powerful impact. Neither history nor sociology tells us much about the sources of discontent and about the mainsprings of such movements. Their life histories as well as the social impact remain unanalyzed in depth. Today we tend to treat them as no more than variants of Hindu castes and have little understanding of their total impact in the reshaping of local and regional traditions. We know little about why and how they gathered momentum and lost it and how they got relegated into the Hindu caste hierarchy which they wished to destroy. There is little meaningful assessment of the transformation of social goals and of modes of action to achieve the new goals set up by them. There is little doubt that they changed the character of Hinduism, but the directions of change remain uncharted and the extent of change remains unmeasured.

So far I have spoken only about Hinduism. Indian society is characterized by stabilized pluralism and a composite culture.

Our tribal heritage is significant. The tribal impact both in the genetic make-up of the population and in shaping its belief and ritual is considerable. The tribal groups that have not been absorbed into the fold of Hindu society have also undergone a series of convulsions. There has been a ferment within. In some of these groups efforts have been made to revive ancient traditions in their pristine purity. Others have tried to vitalize some of their key cultural elements and accept the powerful currents of the wider society as an independent compartment of their lives. Persistent efforts have been made to reinterpret tribal tradition to exemplify its contemporaneity or to show that some of the contemporary elements were already built into their traditional fabric.

Some have hopefully waited for the return of their gods to earth with rich and lavish presents that would bring to them the denied affluence. The micro-sociology of these movements is only beginning to be studied now.

Christianity and Islam are old religions in India. Contrary to popular belief Christianity did not come to India with the conquerors. Nor is the Indian Christian a pathetic caricature of the white conqueror. It was a well established religion in the southern part of India at a time when some of the erstwhile conquerors of this land, who are popularly believed to have brought the Gospel with them, were still pagans. Christianity was Indianized first, its pseudo-Western phase came much later. How much do we know about the process of the Indianization of Christianity? Similarly, Islam also did not come with the conquerors. Those who brought it to India and those who adopted it first did not have the benefit of lectures on Indianization; nevertheless Islam was Indianized. How much do we know about the Indianized form of Islam? When a powerful wave of it came with the conquerors, it soon transcended the bonds of ethnicity and got considerably attuned to the Indian milieu. Movements within Islam are significant. They are known but their impact on Islamic society in India and the wider society in general are still an area of darkness. The ethos of the harmonic co-existence of Islam and Hinduism in India remains insufficiently examined. Few of us recognize that Judaism is still practised in certain parts in India. Culturally the Ben-Israelis of Maharashtra are indistinguishable from Hindus. History tells us little about their Indianization.

Living societies draw their sustenance from tradition for it contributes to their self-image and identity, but tradition itself is rarely static and unchanging. Alternative paths to action are generated by internal stresses and strains. Powerful impulses from outside necessitate redefinition of goals and changes in institutional instrumentalities. Indian society is no exception to this general law of society. Over the centuries there has been considerable redefinition of social objectives and change in the institutional means to achieve the redefined goals. Movements of dissent, protest, and reform have played an important part in this. In their efforts to bring about change they have reshaped and vitalized tradition. It is imperative that we have an objective assessment of these movements.

Perhaps history never repeats itself, but it nevertheless influences the course of the present and the future in a variety of ways. The content of social philosophy changes; but the hang-over of the past is not always painful and dysfunctional. Social systems persist in parts but the systems of meaning implicit in them undergo imperceptible changes. The traditions of new India that we hope to build will not remain uninformed and uninspired by the tradition of the past. The options and choices are ours, but the past is not wholly irrelevant. It is in this context that rather than be misguided by myths and stereotypes that attribute a false changelessness to society we look into its more dynamic mechanisms that have set new goals for it and adopted new strategies for their realization.

S C Malik

Movements : Within the Framework of Change

INVESTIGATING PROBLEMS OF CHANGE—SPECIALLY SOCIAL CHANGE—IS AN Important area of research today. Attention has been focused on change because of major events in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as industrialization, world wars, independence movements, large-scale planning and modernization processes which have been breaking up earlier values of societies everywhere.¹ Historically, the problem of change has always interested scholars. But today, it is of special interest because of the unprecedented magnitude of change in this century. The rates of change now are relatively much more continuous, consistent and rapid compared to what happened at any other time.² It is therefore worth our while to review briefly certain propositions about change, in order to place movements in India in a proper framework.

Until the end of the World War II, it was believed that equilibrium and static models were adequate in providing explanations for the understanding of problems of change. But social science research tells us that this is not sufficient. A framework of dynamic laws is required, and the earlier models ignored the role of conflict, deviation and other such 'dysfunctional' elements.³ For example, all events, ideas or movements that attempted to change society in India were thought to be of a minor nature since the normative/prescriptive values were presumed to be all-pervasive and relevant to all times. But now we know that no people have ever permanently accepted—voluntarily—any institution, value or idea as an unchanging one. In course of time there arise 'dysfunctional' aspects which cause tension, produce inconsistencies, discontinuities, and strain. Consequently, change and continuity in Indian civilization require an examination of these processes. While India has been characterized by the interdependence of its subsystems (unity) contradictions are also an essential aspect of it. This is obvious because there has always been an unequal distribution of wealth, power, and status, apart from cultural diversity which give rise to situations of tension and conflict from time to time, such

as those that challenged the established controlled centres and have been a major cause for the origin of various movements.

An important factor in bringing about change in a stable system, for the rise of any type of movement (be it rebellion, revolt, reform, dissent or protest), is non-conformism. Non-conformist tendencies are intrinsic to societies, because of two basic reasons. The first is a psychological one perhaps because ambiguity and ambivalence are part of human nature. In every ongoing system there are always a few individuals who have a desire to non-conform (an essential ingredient of creativity), which often leads to the formation of movements. Since this tendency to oppose the accepted ongoing system exists in every society, there are also ways and means to control nonconformism if it reaches a point of threatening the system. But nonconformism should not be seen as something that merely disrupts; it also facilitates the adjustment of a society—civilization—to new situations that make the old order out of date so to speak. The basic causes of the breakdown in socialization processes may be many—changes in technology, economics, religious ideas, or even *inspiration* from non-indigenous sources. These are times when certain individuals perceive the changing realities and come to the fore to form their own groups, rejecting the established standard of conduct.⁴

Second, non-conformist tendencies are logically created specially at the ideational level, because prescriptive values seldom come up anywhere near being achieved in actual conduct particularly amongst those who prescribe them. When this inconsistency of individuals in the established order becomes apparent to others, some among the latter make an effort to rectify the imperfections in order to create a new social order which comes closer to the norms. This inherent logical contradiction is a basic tension-producing factor. What causes or sparks off this awareness may be due to different factors—such as techno-economic changes that often disturb the social order—which require a re-examination of norms and values. For example, the origin of Buddhist, Jain and other heterodox movements in India (generally speaking during these centuries also in Western Asia and China as well) may be seen as a result of the introduction of large-scale iron technology and with it urbanization.

Apart from various factors which bring about change, the rational orientation of man also brings about change through deliberate planning. Moreover, attempts to reorganize substantially societal patterns also take place through inter-group conflict and hostility, and require an understanding of group dynamics. Similarly, multiple factors are necessary to understand movements, specially social or religious ones behind which often lie political and economic causes. For significant social change to be successful, its operationalization has to be through politico-economic means, i.e., changes in the established economic and political systems become essential. It remains to be examined as to what the role of these factors in 'radical' dissent and protest movements in India was since, so far, we seem to know more about

reformist movements in India, whereby a gradual reorganization of the system took place. 'Radical' change associated with the idea of 'progress' is a value judgement since it identifies change in an approved direction. But, in the wider context of change, we may have to examine movements which advocate a return to idyllic views of the past, revivalist tendencies or 'reactionary' movements. Political revolts and rebellions are not covered by the category of movements, since rebellions are generally localized and directed against particular grievances; while political revolts do not necessarily imply any basic social change, they imply mere interchange of power groups that has been going on rather violently since the early history of mankind.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries socio-political experiments indicate that economic growth does not, as was thought earlier, always bring about political stability unless it is accompanied by basic socio-political changes. If, for example, economic growth is very rapid innovations and technological changes may also be too fast to cope with both in the case of means of production and types of labour demanded. And, instability results due to drastic social and spatial movements. The disruption of established life in turn causes a deep psychological impact on personalities because of rootlessness and normlessness.⁵ Social revolutions—as these manifest themselves at the economic or political level—imply that a considerable proportion of the population is involved in changing the core structure of the existing society. Examples, in recent times, of socio-political and economic revolutions which were a consequence of the unequal distribution of wealth, property and other means of existence may be given from Europe, U.S.S.R. and China. There were revolts in both urban and rural areas; in the former areas specially in the slums, during the beginning of industrial revolution, for the lives of people here were wretched in great contrast to those of the wealthy living in other areas. At the rural level, land was distributed unequally, and this was even more crucial as a critical area where injustice was very obvious. Land tenures have always been a political issue creating revolutions in Germany (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), France (eighteenth century), and more recently in Russia and China.⁶

Viewed from the social and political viewpoints, no radical restructuring of the system seems to have taken place in India. Perhaps this is because we are viewing the problem in a Western context, ignoring native categories of thought. At any rate, it is clear that there is no inherent conservatism of people in India, who have opted and do opt for socio-economic change rather than a well settled life. In other words, all societies prefer a medium level of change between maximum stability and maximum instability. But we require research into the rates of change which are acceptable at different times in different areas, as to these optimum conditions.⁷ To illustrate, while on the one hand for the sake of stability people accept social differentiation, hierarchy of roles, and unequal positions in terms of goals and statuses, the other inequalities—relatively speaking—are only accepted up to a point. When these go beyond

a certain point and seem grossly unfair, specially at the socio-economic levels, then the existing order is strongly challenged. Hence, seeking equality—relative again—is also an essential element of a society, whereby from time to time it attempts to balance inequalities, gross contradictions or situations of relative deprivation. It is in this context that movements of various kinds play the role of bringing about adjustments, and their study has an important bearing on the planned changes which India is attempting since Independence.

If seeking equality—narrowing the gap between ideal values and practised actions—is intrinsic to human beings, why is it that in several areas of the world, and in India itself, people have not revolted against their inhuman conditions—conditions of living in hunger and starvation? Here, we are referring to the psychological dimension, and not to politico-economic causes, and colonial or other forms of exploitation. Studies indicate that an essential element for radical change (revolt) is a consciousness of one's—the individual's or the group's—degraded position, i.e., not only of hunger as such but also an awareness of having to suffer inhuman treatment. Hungry men seldom revolt, for they are involved in the primary act of staying alive. A consciousness is brought about when groups or individuals compare their lives to the better life of others, or if they themselves were better off at one time and are now in a degraded position. It has, therefore, been noted that revolutions are preceded by a long period of rising expectations accompanied by a decline of gratifications. Frustration is brought about in a large group of people by a failure to gratify—relatively speaking—economic and social needs. In other words, through new wants and aspirations—whether the cause is economic or technological—dissatisfaction is widespread among lower and middle classes and even sometimes among the upper classes, all of whom join in movements of various kinds. In these times of change, transitional personalities arise who have broken off their ties with the past but are uncertain about the future. The leaders of the underprivileged, therefore, generally come from a class where relative deprivation is much less—or non-existent—than in the lower classes.⁸

The factor of alienation is an important one since it causes rethinking, leading to ideas of establishing a new order. This is why if individuals have close attachment to groups and subgroups, extended families, or even professional groups like trade unions, the secure position of an individual acts against any revolution or social change. For instance, despite the degraded position of the untouchables and other low classes in the social hierarchy of India, there have been no revolts because individuals in these groups have at least a secure social position, especially because other classes are dependent upon them. Alienation also takes place in the establishment among 'ruling' class individuals, i.e., ambiguous politico-economic situations cause a rethinking among certain individuals that creates antagonism within the upper crust. Thus, a rethinking caused because of ideological contradictions in a society under changing conditions throws up people who wish to bring about a better way of life. But

changing situations, movements, may also arise due to charismatic leadership that causes stability or instability, and this important factor needs to be taken into account. This indicates that the role of the individual is crucial, since movements begin in the minds of men, with ideas.

Finally, apart from the above very sketchy framework of change within which movements should be viewed, empirical studies of these historic situations require their examination over a block of time, in a given area, i.e., dissent, protest and reform movements have to be examined in their particular form, content and degree 'regionally'—or spatio-temporally.⁹ The movement's goals have to be measured against existing norms, i.e., in terms of what constitute the essential elements of the system—system-identity, in order to assess the type and form of changes which in fact are brought about by any movement. This implies evolving methods to measure in some ways the magnitude and rates of such changes, by means of certain objective techniques of analyses whereby we may be able to categorize various movements; whether these are meant for localized objectives (for redressing particular grievances), for major reforms, or are aimed at drastic or 'radical' change. But the problem of seeking the origin remains, because movements are not always organized with specific objectives from the beginning. Therefore, in order to identify a movement which we see crystallized later, at its inception, certain symptoms—direct or indirect—need to be located. The expression of frustration, for instance, among the elite and the intellectuals is a reliable symptom of new social movements. Other signs of disturbances may be gauged at the level of law-breaking incidences, including crime and the way these infringements are handled either by punishment or other means by the establishment; viz., the more rigorous the law, the greater may be the disturbance, or feeling of uneasiness in a society.¹⁰ The reaction of the establishment, whether it seeks to suppress or control them, or adapt itself, the various reforms as a result of these agitations also require to be noted. Such an assessment will tell us about the success or failure of a movement. Non-social signs of dissent and protest are often symbolically represented in the spheres of the arts, language and literature or even ideology; at levels that are apparently of no immediate consequence in transforming the social environment, or related to it.¹¹ Studies correlating non-social symptoms with social movements have yet to be worked out and may be investigated within the context of civilizational change. This is illustrated very summarily here in terms of Pitirim A. Sorokin's¹² historical and social philosophy.¹³ His objective methodology may give us certain guidelines for examininig movements in India.

For Sorokin history is a series of developments governed by change, and civilizations oscillate between three cultural divisions; the ideational, the idealistic and the sensate. For instance, ideational art is symbolic, while the sensate one tries to get as near to the object as seen by our sense perceptions. 'Hindu'

art has been consistently ideational signifying other-worldly aspects (Sanskrit lacks a word for art), and is interpreted by religion and philosophy, rather than as art for art's sake. The epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana are also of the ideational type. However, changes in the subsystems are indicators of changing civilization, viz., in the arts, the styles—forms—of painting, sculpture, music, architecture, literature and drama. Each of these has to be worked out separately; then their interrelationships to each other, and even the wider relationships of the arts to science, philosophy, law, economics, politics and religion and so on, by what is called 'logico-meaningful sense'.

Similarly, since ideational ethical values and law are absolute, i.e., their purpose is to bring people into unity with the supreme and absolute source of values, there can be no question of man's free choice of values, to bring about major changes by any notion of expediency or relativity. This is possible in a sensate ethical system which has a series of manmade rules, justified and deserving respect only to the extent that they increase the total amount of human happiness. In India, it appears that the idealistic ethical system (which occupies a position midway between the ideational and sensate system) was dominant in the main and continues to be so today. Of course, with the modernization process, idealistic societies everywhere are moving towards the sensate type. This, from the ideational viewpoint, amounts to moral bankruptcy, since sensate objectives—the increase in wealth and power—serve no moral values; and in the absence of transcending either individual or national self-interest there is the devaluation of the dignity of human life leading ultimately to regimentation and totalitarianism.

At the socio-political level ideational cultures are not only familistic, but have close social relationships, which in the sensate ones are generally compulsory and contractual. Since the form of government is linked with social relations in general, ideational cultures breed theocracies, and have a political regime and leadership which are partly theocratic and partly secular (of the type in sensate societies). Examples given of theocracies are the Brahminic, Buddhist and Tibetan cultures, and the Taoists parts of Chinese culture. This is how the 2,000 years of dominance of Brahmans may be explained, which was formally not the ruling class but 'ruled' because of its prestige and superiority, amounting to a decentralized theocracy. Sensate cultures give supreme power to the rich, to the military, or to groups which physically dominate societies, whether they be organizers, entrepreneurs, inventors and scientists or various manipulators and bosses.

At the economic level, idealistic or mixed cultures are 'lower' economically than the sensate ones. While in sensate cultures there is a high level of economic welfare, after a peak is reached conditions unfavourable to its continued existence effect all its values including its economic values. By these immanent developments, its decline is hastened by wars, revolts, revolutions and a sharpening of the class struggle. Sorokin, therefore, says that the generalization of a close association which is supposed to exist between economic conditions and cultural

activities, as the economic interpretation of history suggests, is not true. This is why theories arising out of a purely sensate society (that is, such a framework of reference) may not be applicable to the 'way of life' of an ideational society. Viewed in this way, dissent, protest and reform, in the context of Western concepts and definitions is perhaps not reflected in India, i.e., sharp changes are not seen. But it does suggest that there were transitional stages from one culture phase to another.

It is during a transitional phase that various conflicts and wars take place because severe disruptions weaken or remove many of the factors which earlier made for order and stability, i.e., at this time the major-cultural systems of values in all subsystems as well as social relationships associated with the system and established government regulations, begin to crumble and alongside ideas about freedom creep in and further upset a settled way of life. What is of interest for various periods of social unrest and movements in India, is the question of internal disturbances due to the conflict in relations between social groups. A leading phenomenon during these times is of riots and revolutions, which may be examined by means of statistical methods. Perhaps some such studies may be carried out for India. Sorokin has studied these changes in various nations, in terms of population, social areas, degree of violence and duration, and has made charts for various periods. Further more, he tries to locate accurate indicators in order to determine at least four or five essential aspects of social disturbances. These are :

1. The proportionate extent of areas of disturbances, i.e., the area and territory, type and kind of cities, villages and other settlements in which the disturbances occur;
2. The proportion of the population taking an active part, for and against;
3. The duration;
4. Its relative intensity or the amount of intensity of violence;
5. The effects of disturbances.

This is a very brief sketch of Sorokin's culture and civilizational classification. His over-riding concern is to understand the dynamics of social and cultural change, and to evolve an overall comprehensive social philosophy, in order to bring about a total perception of the historical developments of various systems, raising certain pertinent questions. This or other frameworks in the civilizational context may be formulated by us. For instance, if we examine Indian movements within this larger perspective, it may be noted that since there is a dominance of various shades of ideational—idealistic—characteristics, there have been no major structural changes, or revolutions.

S U M M A R Y

There are certain propositions about change within the framework of which

both the processes and patterns of specific movements in India may be investigated, explained and understood. These propositions are as follows:

1. The universality of change.

2. Both acceptance and a desire for change at various levels is an intrinsic part of human societies; this is why existing structures are never permanently accepted.

3. Adaptations and flexibilities of a system to changing situations are essential for its survival. Every society seeks to establish optimum conditions between maximum stability and maximum instability. There are two important aspects of this:

i. A tendency to maintain an equilibrium and harmony in order to balance trends towards any extreme state of instability. For this, conformism and social approval of individuals are necessary for system-identity maintenance. Stability is maintained by the acceptance of relative inequalities and hierarchy in the social order.

ii. Conflict, tension, contradiction, deviation and strain, etc., are regular processes, rather than accidental accompaniments of minor importance, which allow the system to change. There is, therefore, an inherent desire for seeking relative 'equality'.

4. Apart from sources of change which are due to the influence of 'external' ideas, the environment and population, internal change may be seen by examining the subsystems of values—ideas, economics, politics and technology, etc. The possibility of 'immanent' change, at a point of time, taking place due to the accumulation of small-scale changes in an ongoing system, needs to be taken into account.

5. The magnitude and quality of change will determine the definition and identity of a movement, whereby it may be placed in the range—from a reform to a revolution. This requires a study of the rates of change (delimited within a unit of time and area, and measured against certain identifiable and accepted norms and values).

6. Early symptoms of movements may be seen in various kinds of disturbances that range from political ideas, non-conformism to breach of law (either criminal or civil) and the type of punishment given and methods of social control. Reflections of non-conformism in art forms, literature, and ideological or religious values, as well as frustration among intellectuals and elite are reliable indicators of new movements. Non-conformity, ambivalence, ambiguity, alienation, etc., are important psychological dimensions of change.

7. Hungry men do not revolt as such. It is a consciousness of hunger—relative to other classes—the disparities and contradictions which is essential. Often, this consciousness exists with middle-classes and the intelligentsia, who tend to be the leaders.

8. Economic growth by itself does not necessarily bring about political stability if it is not accompanied by other subsystemic changes. Similarly, political change—revolutions—need not bring about a social revolution. Basic social change—revolution—has to be accompanied by politico-economic changes.

9. The role of rational deliberate planned change is equally important. Men have always attempted this (though the magnitude and level of modern changes have seldom been seen before) because of an awareness of the past and the future, both at the individual and social levels. We may say that movements begin in the minds of men, with ideas.

10. Movements may be seen within the wider framework of civilizational studies, in order to seek certain patterns, 'rhythms', and regularities, as has been examined by Sorokin.

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Y B Damle

Protest, Dissent and Social Reform : A Conceptual Note

THE THEME UNDER CONSIDERATION HAS BASICALLY TO BE VIEWED WITHIN THE dynamics of social change, because it involves the objectives of bringing about a transformation of the social structure. In every society, however integrated an entity it may be, there exist various fissures, particularly because at any point of time it contains within itself various sources of deprivation, disprivilege and injustice. This is why the facade of integration and stability, not to mention equilibrium, has to be probed into, in order to realize the differentials of opportunities and various amenities of life as well as minimum conditions necessary for realizing one's potential. Nevertheless, the mere existence of deprivation, disprivilege and injustice does not warrant a movement towards changing existing social arrangements. What is essential is the awareness of such differences and an awakening of consciousness in certain sections of society in order to do away with arbitrary differences. It is in this context that the analyses offered by seminal thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber, Karl Mannheim and several others provide a starting point for our enquiry.

Protest, dissent and social reform, while they may represent different phases, are not mutually exclusive; one may find all the three in operation at the same time over a given issue. In fact, one finds them in different permutations and combinations. Therefore, what needs to be understood is the dynamics of social change, and the importance of the dialectical process which is initiated as a result of protest and dissent, and may lead to the transformation of society. 'In its rational form', wrote, Marx 'it (the dialectic) is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professor, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement and therefore, takes into account its transient nature no less

than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.'

Social analysis is not a mere matter of knowing reality, it must also necessarily pave the way for rectifying such a reality. Marx put the maximum emphasis on 'praxis'. All knowledge is for use and it must create a social consciousness among those who seek knowledge so that it is utilized for bringing about change in the desired direction. Taking at once such a position settles the issue of the importance of values, for the social scientist, i.e., the acceptance of the dialectical point of view enables one to look for the incongruity of the social system and reassures one that such incongruity can be undone and that a better order can be created. *Pari passu* with the dialectical approach, the importance of both ideology and utopia cannot be overemphasized. According to the sociology of knowledge, while social consciousness is specific to social, political and economic classes, one finds that as a result of communication it is possible to transmit ideas and ideologies which are specific to a given class to the other classes as well. Then, again, there is the possibility that certain ethical notions often enable even the members of the privileged class to transcend their class interests in order to espouse the cause of other classes. Whether or not the intelligentsia constitute a class by themselves, or are merely spokesmen of other classes and interests, becomes immaterial in this context because they are able to perceive the injustices of certain classes, and are thus able to suggest a way out of such a situation. This is where intellectual analysis often provides the guidelines towards appropriate social action. Consequently, the basic requirement for bringing about change is to create awareness of the social ills, particularly amongst those who stand to suffer by them. But if such social action has to succeed, it requires further careful scrutiny and analysis of the situation. Nevertheless, it may be argued that analysis by itself may not pave the way for social action. But analysis is a necessary condition for social action though it may not be a sufficient condition. Thus we find that the whole theme of protest, dissent and social reform needs to be approached from various perspectives, like the dialectical approach, sociology of knowledge, communication, importance of ideology and utopia, and so on.

Definitions

Some working definitions are given below which may provide a starting point for further discussions.

Protest is generally very specific in nature and centres around a particular issue. But initially there has to be a consciousness of some injustice which is being meted out to certain sections of society as a result of which they protest. It is only when protest takes on a general nature that efforts are made to change or transform society in general instead of resorting to an *ad hoc* solution of a specific problem. Protest, in order to be meaningful, has to be supported by dissent in respect of the institutional arrangements prevailing in society at a point of time. Moreover, it is crucial that institutional arrangements should

not be regarded as final such as their being regarded as divinely ordained and therefore outside the pale of any change. To the extent that legitimacy of an institutional order is ensured, the desire to protest, dissent and to rise in action against it is reduced considerably. Even when people suffer from various kinds of inequities if they have been socialized to accept without complaint their lot, even if it is because of a fatalistic philosophy of life, then the chances of protest and the resulting appropriate action for bringing about social change diminish. Nonetheless, there is no denying the fact that once the consciousness of social inequities is shared by many persons, it can create new ideology and pave the way for social action by promoting appropriate strategies for its organization. Social order and its legitimacy or lack of it is thus very crucial to our understanding of protest, dissent and change. Hence the social sharing of deprivation and disprivilege can be said to be the starting point of protest. On the other hand, dissent becomes meaningful only when it has the backing of a group, i.e., social change can only be brought about through concerted action which is backed by both an ideology and an appropriate organization. Collective action is very necessary for bringing about social change, and here the role played by symbols and the creation of new symbols require analysis since they are appropriate to ideologies and times—a clever manipulation of symbols is very crucial for kindling protest, dissent and change.

It is useful to bear in mind the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate means which are employed to bring about social transformation. When social change is graduated and sought to be brought about by employing legitimate means then one talks about social reform. On the other hand, the discarding of legitimate means and taking recourse to illegitimate means may lead to a revolution. Whatever may be the distinction made in respect of the relative outcomes of social reform, and social revolution, there is no gainsaying the fact that both social reform and social revolution are necessary to bring about social transformation.

For any movement to succeed, it is necessary that the sources of discontent are properly tapped, in order to enlist support of the strategic elements in a society. There are numerous sources of discontent which may stem from all manners of deprivations. By browsing through history, one finds that the intensity with which people feel about a kind of deprivation is specific to given times. To illustrate, one could mention the denial of the paths of salvation to certain strata of Hindu society. But while discontent may be specific to certain strata, it is essential that there is the sensitization of other strata to this discontent, if it has to be widespread. In this way may take place an appropriate analysis of the situation, and the leadership and organization of the movement by persons who are not even directly affected. In turn, this will pave the way for appropriate protest, and dissent, and organized action. History is replete with instances where leadership has shifted from those who initiated protest and dissent to those who ultimately took over the responsibilities for organized action. One cannot think of a better illustration than the role played by Gandhi and

Ambedkar in respect of the scourge of untouchability. While every movement does have a social base, interest in it is often taken by some persons who do not necessarily belong to a relevant social stratum. After all, empathy, social sensitivity and intellectual as well as moral convictions also contribute to bring about change in the desired direction. Consequently, the stress is not on deprivation but relative deprivation, which largely accounts for the incessant efforts made to change the situation, particularly by those sections who have attained a certain modicum of education and prosperity. Here, one cannot help quote a better example than that of Ambedkar who was able to spearhead the movement of untouchables.

While social consciousness about deprivation, disprivilege and injustice initiates appropriate action, there are several ways in which people may react to such situations. One of them is withdrawal, i.e., withdrawing from participation in a social system which has heaped injustice on them. An extreme case would be withdrawing one's role in a division of labour, which can be a very effective weapon particularly in the context of agrarian economy where payment by cash may not exist. Protest, again, may be of an episodic nature and such protests are likely to wane and even die out rapidly. Social reform, on the other hand, means a sustained activity, which is backed by suitable ideology and appropriate methods of organization, albeit it means adhering to legitimate means and operating according to the rules of the game. In short, it is largely a constitutional activity.

Social reform has to be contrasted with revolution because the latter means a discarding of legitimate means and resorting to illegitimate means, including the use of violence to bring about radical transformation. Even at the risk of repetition, it should be mentioned that these various kinds of reactions are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary in reality.

Structural Sources of Protest

There is hardly any parallel between one society and another or between two different times. Therefore, every social structure creates its own types of protest and the styles of expressing such protests. All the same from a study of the history of protests one may learn appropriate lessons as to the efficacy or limitations of different kinds of protests. Ultimately, it depends on the ingenuity of leaders who spearhead such protest movements. Social reform also is specific and is engendered by a given social structure. It is only when people lose faith in social reform that they take recourse to social revolt, specially because of a sense of acute despair or helplessness. Protest, reform and revolt are thus endemic in a social system. Of course, ideologies and forms of organization are often borrowed for this purpose. However, in the history of social movements, including reform and revolution, there is hardly any example of a successful outcome of any social movement purely on the basis of borrowed ideas and strategies. Nevertheless, even if ideologies and organizations are borrowed, these have to be relevant to the social system. Belief is not a mere

matter of intellectual or cognitive doctrine, it is also a matter of prediction or prophesy about the future. It is here that utopia can play a significant role in promoting appropriate social action. Myths and beliefs are extremely useful for promoting action and yet the importance of organized collective action cannot be overemphasized. Lenin, for instance, has paid a great deal of attention to the importance of organization for sustaining revolution. Hence there has to be a combination of ideology and organization in order to sustain any movement for societal transformation.

Politicization of pressure groups is very significant in this context. As a result of politicization of different interest groups, a certain degree of legitimacy is accorded to various kinds of protest, dissent and social reform movements in society. It is the awareness of the dialectical process which sharpens the contradictions inherent in society and promotes appropriate action for reducing these or changing the power relations in such a manner as to annihilate them. Of course, however radical a course of action may be, the various kinds of contradictions keep on manifesting themselves over a period of time and there is no permanent solution to any problem. Society alternates between stability and flux and as such the germination of dissent, protest, reform and revolution in various permutations and combinations seem to be inherent in a society, if various types of injustices have to be counteracted.

Finally, it is relevant to consider whether the foregoing discussion can have any meaning in the Indian situation. Here, by and large, we find that there is the cultural idiom of consensus and agreement rather than dissent. This is a consequence of the process of socialization which is carried out by important institutions like family, caste, religion and so on. What is generally not emphasized is that people, by and large, pay lip service to consensus and agreement and yet there are culturally sanctioned avenues of protest, dissent and reform. Even if one were to scan the *Dharmashastras*, one would find that while lip service was paid to a centralized value system, in reality there were significant departures from it and all kinds of rationalizations were put forward to justify such departures. Then, again, protest and dissent came to be expressed and channelized through the medium of religion. Confrontation was sought to be avoided, and yet various departures were made and adequate opportunities were offered to various kinds of protest, dissent and social reform movements. To the extent that the legitimacy of various kinds of inequities is impaired, protest, dissent and social reform movements usually do gather momentum and as such, they create restlessness among the various strata, making it obligatory to bring about a radical transformation of the social structure.

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Discussion

on Papers by S C Malik and Y B Damle

BADRINATH/ The approach of these papers is very abstract, particularly the propositions of Damle which have no root in the Indian experience. These abstractions and the terms of dissent, protest, etc., have their own historical traditions in the West arising out of a very specific context. Since all knowledge is historical and all thinking is historical, some of these ideas should be with reference to specific historical contexts.

DEVAHUTI/ The abstractions can be supported with many historical examples. By and large, in India there is a cultural idiom of consensus and agreement. For instance, in the *Dharmashastras* there is justification of the marriages of Draupadi, and the *Niyoga* custom, by which a man is allowed to cohabit with a woman who is not his wife in order to have progeny, and so on. At any rate, since the role of symbols and leadership is important in any movement, differences between an artist, a prophet (not one who prophesies but in the historical sense, i.e., as a religious or a social reformer) and the spokesman of a cause should be borne in mind. The prophet is generally more acceptable than the artist even though the latter is several places ahead of the former. But this is because the prophet, in order to be acceptable to contemporary society which is to be reformed, tries to meet it half way. On the other hand, the artist is likely to be a bit of a dreamer, an idealist.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Since the concept of 'reform' and 'revolution' have arisen in a unilinear context, both terms are not meaningful in India where the plural or multilinear concept is much more valid. Damle has drawn our attention to structural continuity. But reforms may exist in societies where structural continuities are not clearly defined, or where these may be actually and tacitly accepted. Therefore, in a revolution the first thing is to reject all structural continuities. That is a most important distinction. But even here, in a unilinear context, there may be violent reforms, or a non-violent revolution. For example, the reform of society up to the middle ages brought about by

Martin Luther had a certain violent colour about it. On the other hand, the revolution brought about by Gandhi is definitely not a violent one. The point is that a certain structural continuity or values came from the medieval and not the ancient period. This is why Martin Luther consciously broke away from the Christian tradition.

S C DUBE/ In every social order there is a hierarchy of legitimacy. There may be a legitimization for a no-change attitude, e.g., the *Sanatana Dharma* movement taken in its literal sense. At the same time, there may be contending forms of legitimation. In fact, a revolution is something which is subject to cultural legitimation of one particular kind, in terms of certain new goals of achievement by a particular group which does not accept traditional cultural goals as well as institutional means of the existing society. But there are movements which concentrate and centre round the middle where there is more truthful legitimization either of the social objectives or of institutional means.

C PARVATHAMMA/ The use of the term 'legitimate' has to be contextual, i.e., it depends upon the point of view, whether it is from the section of people who impose the views, ideologies and values on the majority of people, or it is the logic of a group which is actually trapped and whose interests are served in this situation by adopting 'illegitimate' means. If we are looking for change, this cannot be brought about by legitimate means, for these only serve the interests of the establishment. But as in a revolution illegitimate means have to be used. For example, since Gandhi was for social reform, he adopted legitimate means; whereas since Ambedkar was for social revolution he adopted illegitimate means. To the extent that Gandhi's technique involved conformity to legitimate means it was very good for the preservation of vested interests, or as he described himself—a *Sanatana* Hindu, for whom the practice of untouchability was not inherently wrong since it was inherent in the caste system.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Historical knowledge is one form of knowledge whereby we approach human understanding, and historians are quite aware of this. Sociologists on the other hand try to approach social reality differently. This is commonplace, but should be borne in mind. At any rate, there are indications in both the papers, specially expressed forcefully by Damle, that there is a great toleration of dissent within the Indian system; that there is an attempt to arrive at some sort of 'muddled consensus'. But it is doubtful that those who created normative values in India were equally conscious of the value of permitting dissent within the system in order to promote the structural strength of the system. If this was so, this point may be brought out more clearly.

S C DUBE/ We have here problems of semantics and of definitions, despite

our attempt to have a multidisciplinary dialogue. Sociologists and anthropologists have certain habits of thought and expression, which are different from those of the historians. This has to be borne in mind in our discussions, albeit without unnecessary compartmentalization.

N SANJEEVI/ In defining dissent and protest, while different meanings may be given, we must think of these in the context of the goals of change, and the evaluation of its scale. For example, the role and interpretation of the scriptures is important; Mahatma Gandhi had his own interpretations of the scriptures which were very different to the others who upheld traditional values.

J S GREWAL/ A distinction between a movement for reform and one for tradition is essential, if we have to discern protest or dissent. Here, the reaction of the upholders of tradition against the protagonists of change and reform belongs primarily to the study of 'tradition', and only secondarily to 'reform'. The absorption of the values propounded by dissenting movements into the framework of tradition is important but a separate issue. On the other hand, a distinction between reform and revolution may be seen in the means employed, the magnitude and the pace of change.

DEVAHUTI/ As far as the ancient period is concerned, reform was built into the institutional system; whether it concerned the ownership of land (it was either by the king or the people), or the nature of monarchy (divinity of the king or the opposite, his demonic nature).

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Since there was not any single authority in India to explain and determine the norms and values, what Devahuti says belongs to the *Dharmashastras* which is different to the later *smritis* written by Yajñavalkya. This is one example. There are thus not only two lines but a vast multitude of lines of thoughts, not necessarily cognizant of each other. For instance, the Pali canon does not seem to recognize the existence or validity of the *Vedas*, or the *Upanishads*; the Buddha does not mind women inheriting property while the *Dharmashastras* do not seem to recognize this right. Nevertheless, both the things were accepted at the same time, and even the king and commoner were following it at one and the same time.

S C MISRA/ Is it really possible that these schools of thought did not recognize the contradictions, and were quite oblivious of each other?

PRATAP CHANDRA/ There was no unilinear concept, and there is no hard historical evidence for overbearing unilinear traditions moulding the thought of everybody. Our acquaintance with Western history, Western philosophy, has blinded us. Therefore, we must consider it in a multilinear concept.

DEVAHUTI/ Pratap Chandra does not contradict what I have said because even in the Buddhist tradition exactly the same thing applies. And the

converse of it is also true. In the *dighnikay* in the context about the freedom of Buddhist spirit, the idea of the kingdom of Maha-Sudarshan was not the same as that of Asoka. Both were ideal kings, yet with two different ideals.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ But was Asoka really a Buddhist king? If the king is Buddhist, does it make the kingdom Buddhist?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ It is correct to state that Hinduism does have options given the structural plurality and social fragmentation of society. The interaction of ideas and social systems has to be seen in this light, which will reconcile the points of Devahuti to what Pratap is saying.

K J SHAH/ Dissent and protest may also be seen from the point of view of those who suffer from it. Injustice is perhaps equally a problem, consciously or unconsciously, for those who become masters of these. And if these are also the problems of the masters of the injustices, would it not be the duty of the intellectuals, in their role, that they become spokesmen of a certain class or tribe? Should not the intellectual also perform the role of not being the spokesman of a particular tribe but of the society as a whole, so as to take into account not only the difficulties of the sufferers of injustices but also the perpetrators of the injustices? But if both these are taken into account, the question arises, would not such an intellectual require not merely intellectual ability but also something else which enables him to see the problem and the possible solution from the point of view of the society as a whole? And if this is required, is it not possible for the scientists to provide a solution from this angle?

If I am right in raising these questions then to meet the challenge of such problems, we will have to search in the intellectual consciousness, also a moral consciousness, whereas, in a number of things that have been said so far, it appears that the values which are mentioned for a scientific study will not be adequate. We have at least to refer to the moral consciousness of the person who is thinking of the problems, because then alone will he be able to suggest something that might be useful. These are the social questions that I believe one has to bear in mind in our discussion.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ The entire notion of legitimate and illegitimate means has a crucial dimension which ought to be emphasized. This is the question of the means that are employed for dissent and protest. I think the very idea of dissent implies employing means which are regarded as illegitimate by the establishment, because the whole moral responsibility of those who advocate dissent is that they also ought to question the legitimacy of the means that the establishment has imposed upon them.

P H PRABHU/ In using the terms dissent, protest, reform as also in using the terms *dharma*, *pantha*, the trap of semantic difficulties should be realized; that

such difficulties involve ambiguities and equivocation and come in the way of arriving at fruitful conclusions. For example, *dharma* is not the same as the Western one of 'religion'—a concept developed in the Western historical context which connotes a system that provides more or less clear boundaries of thought and action in specified areas. For example, Christianity as a religion connotes certain basic dogmas of faith which a man who claims to be a Christian has to accept without questioning, and certain revealed truths as given in the Bible. On the other hand, the term *dharma*—neither in its original *shastric* sense nor in the sense of customary usage (*rudhi*) throughout the centuries—means any kind of 'bindings'. A Hindu may believe in one God, many gods, no God, idols as gods, personal God, anthropomorphic representation of God, a Universal or Supreme Principle or Energy (*Sakti*), a Natural law, and so forth; and yet be regarded as a good Hindu. Neither the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* nor the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which are revered by many Hindus are the same thing for the Hindu as the Bible is for the Christians or the *Koran* for the Muslims. A large number of illustrations from the ancient texts like the *Purāṇas* may be cited here. For instance, the famous saint in Maharashtra, Visobā Khechar, who was found by a searcher of the ultimate truth (or God) to be sleeping in a temple with his feet on the *Shiva-Linga*; and the searcher who was aghast at the sight, politely woke up the saint and suggested he move his feet away from the deity. Whereupon the saint requested the searcher to kindly lift up his (the saint's) feet and put them where the *Shiva-Linga* was not. The searcher tried to do so, but wherever he tried to rest the saint's feet, a *Shiva-Linga* emerged! Thus (so goes the legend which refers to an occurrence of only two or three centuries ago) the searcher for ultimate truth was convincingly shown that on the one hand the stone image is not the God, and on the other, that God exists everywhere. Such incidents of the recent past—although legendary—are found in almost all parts of India. And although legendary in narration, they reveal an important basic belief in the heart of hearts of a Hindu, whatever he may do in practice. Otherwise even such legends cannot be fabricated, especially in relation to historical persons of the recent past.

These observations are pertinent in the use of the terms and concepts like dissent, protest, and reform, especially when we want to consider them in the 'Indian tradition'. The concepts as they have had their origins and have developed in the history of Western civilization are pregnant with implications which may have no parallel counterparts in Indian tradition. The English terms 'protest' and 'protestants', for instance, when applied to the Indian context, seem to carry different meanings. The Buddha, for instance, was only one of the many 'protestants' in Indian history against some of the Hindu practices, and he established and propagated several principles of practice and faith, many of which the Hindus accepted as correctives, modifications and even accretions to their practices. And the Buddha's ideology has generally not been perceived by the Hindu as an alien ideology, to the extent that the Buddha himself is revered as the ninth of the ten *avatars* of God Vishnu.

Thus, trying to interpret the behaviour and social processes of one human group by importing concepts and labels of terms that have evolved historically in different contexts in another human group can only cause confusion of thinking. It may also be remembered that the Indian mind seems to be in an ambivalent state in regard to many a question relating to the Hindu *dharma*. On a group scale, dissent and protest acquire true and full meanings in relation to what hurts or offends the strong faith of one of the two parties concerned. The Hindu does not seem to feel terribly offended by some other group's custom of eating beef or pork, believing in one God or a personal anthropomised God, idol or idols as gods, or no god, or many gods; he would bow with equal reverence before the shrine of a Muslim *pir* or the Christian shrine as he would before a Hindu temple; he has saints like Kabir and many others who have proclaimed the identity of Ram and Rahim, and does not have a fanatic aggressive reaction aroused against any beliefs or faiths or creeds of other groups—so far as 'religion' is concerned, with any other variety of religious faiths and corresponding behaviour. This is probably the secret of what is called the Hindu's 'tolerance' towards other faiths and practices.

The question seems to be related to what can be called cognitive consonance and dissonance. So far as 'religious' beliefs are concerned, what appears to non-Hindus as paradoxical and even contradictory is not perceived as such by the Hindu and seems to reconcile and coexist harmoniously in his mind without causing any mental stress, and is effected in his behaviour also in smooth and natural manner without his being ruffled and distressed about the same. This can be understood readily when we realize, again, that *dharma* is such an oceanic, broad based, all-encompassing and also basically non-rigid and flexible concept whose only central and essential theme is *dhārana*, holding together of society, and nothing else matters. Only a Hindu Gandhi could dare to proclaim: "To the millions who have to go without two meals a day the only acceptable form in which God dare appear is food". One wonders if an adherent of any other religion could dare to say this so outspokenly and yet be regarded as a true devotee of his religion. And Gandhi asserted that he was a Hindu, and the Hindus accept him as such unquestionably. Human conflicts and tensions which religions cannot resolve and, on the contrary, have even fostered, *dharma*—which is not equivalent to 'religion'—could neatly reconcile and resolve.

RESPONSE

S C MALIK/ Historical knowledge is not static and fixed. If we only consider facts, and not the framework of one's search for historical knowledge, then we unconsciously place our ideas into "facts". All history, I believe, is "contemporary history", i.e., the time, the area governs our idea about what we consider to be "facts". The terms dissent, protest, etc., have their European origin but if we redefine them in the Indian context, this would be quite legitimate.

In the same way, we have to evolve 'abstract' theories or concepts in order to understand why we are studying these movements. From a broader perspective, it is in the context of change, i.e., how various processes of change in India have operated, in civilizational processes, that have to be understood. This is not the same thing as understanding historic change as such for we are discussing processes within which these movements arise, such as non-conformist tendencies inherent in societies. Similarly, inherent it is or so it appears—is the tendency to change and to be stable. Between these two tendencies, conflict and tension situations arise and these need to be considered. Again, both socio-economic factors and superstructural values are important and we need to take these into account though the former may not have been brought about clearly in my paper. Actual ways of dissent and protest may be empirically examined as suggested by Sorokin, for instance.

Y B DAMLE *φ* Several problems were raised. One was whether the concepts of protest, dissent and social reform were rooted in Indian society or had been wholesale lifted from a Western setting. Therefore, were these terms really relevant for India? But it is not necessary to be bound by the historical context in which the terms protest, dissent and social reform have arisen because in India also there have been protest, dissent and social reform movements. Of course, these were largely a consequence of various kinds of deprivations and disprivileges, unlike in Europe, which were a function of the social structural arrangements.

Similarly, leadership in respect of protest, dissent and social reform has to be analyzed mainly with reference to the situation where social relations were at stake. However, attention as such was not paid by me to the role played by the artists and prophets whose main areas of operation is the cultural field.

Nevertheless, there has been acceptance of dissent in so far as social relations which has been revealed through the various social institutions is concerned. But one does not know whether dissent was consciously permitted, though one may conjecture that dissent and at least deviation was consciously allowed. There is reason to believe that reform was institutionalized in the system.

Protest, dissent and reform and revolution although they typify qualitatively different entities are nevertheless not mutually exclusive. Moreover, the usual assumed phasing of these is not also warranted by facts of the situation. In social revolt recourse is taken to adopting illegitimate means. However, legitimate and illegitimate means can be distinguished in terms of the existing system of authority, i.e., what is inconvenient for the established authority is generally categorized as illegitimate, especially in case of social revolt all means are employed for achieving ends which are ideologically justified.

In discussing the role of intellectuals, adequate importance has to be attached to ethical and moral convictions along with intellectual analysis. Leadership in respect of protest and social reform can be provided by intellectuals only on

the basis of their intellectual analysis and moral convictions. However, they will necessarily have to voluntarily concede leadership to persons who belong to the aggrieved strata. Therefore, while intellectuals may initiate dissent, protest and social reform, they should not expect to continue as leaders.

As far as social change is concerned, this is not a natural kind of change of history over a period of time, but deliberate change; brought about deliberately in a desired direction. Change through dissent, protest, social reform and revolution to attain our objectives is one such kind.

Matters of legitimacy is again a matter of definition, as defined by the establishment or the powers that be. There was some misconception that I meant Gandhi to have used legitimate means and Ambedkar to have used illegitimate means. While Gandhi took initiative in respect of the problem of harijans, the problem could not be effectively tackled unless and until Ambedkar came on the scene. Thus, the initiators of change are those who actually undertook the responsibility for furthering the process or for preventing the process to fruition. It is not a question of legitimacy or illegitimacy.

In the Hindu cultural idiom, there is consensus, and it is a myth to think of a centralized value system of Hindus. But even in the *Dharmashastras* and major institutions of Hindus particularly, like marriage, family, caste and so on, there are definite departures from the idealized norms which became a part and parcel of Hindu ways of life, Hindu social interaction and Hindu social behaviour. Consciously or otherwise there was acceptance or incorporation of these various kinds of dissent or departures or deviations. It is very clear that a revolution means structural change, rather than tinkering with the existing kind of structure which can be attained more or less through reforms because reforms are largely a kind of constitutional activity and they definitely follow the rules of the game. All these terms, however, are neither mutually exclusive nor are these necessarily phased from one period to the other. Simultaneously these various developments may often take place.

C Badrinath

Dissent, Protest and Reform : the Historical Context

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SEMINAR THE PROBLEM OF THE CONTEXT OF TERMS WE use must be cleared before wider issues are discussed. There are two basic points. The first is: Is it permissible to use words that arose in a totally different historical context, words like *protest*, *dissent* and *reform* while describing events in the history of India? This is not a mere semantic problem. The basic objection is to something deeper—to the wrong understanding which is caused by applying to the Indian situation words that represent wholly dissimilar experiences of Christian-European history. Similarly, we use words like *renaissance*, *secularism* and *social change* as if there were in our history, too, the corresponding facts, of which there is no evidence. Since words have a cultural and historical context—experience—by misapplying such words, we misjudge the Indian past; and, equally thereby understand the present incorrectly.

To elaborate, until Martin Luther appeared on the scene, the word *protest* carried with it no negative meaning. The Greeks did not have that word; in Roman law, to protest meant 'to make an assertion', 'to put forth a case'. Even after Luther this usage continued, for example in English literature. Shakespeare's 'the lady doth protest too much' is an instance. Even today phrases like 'I protest my innocence' is common usage. The movement started by Luther on the day he nailed his famous theses on the door of the Catholic Church, and the theological and political events that followed, gave that special meaning to the word 'protest'. Hence the specific historical content of the words *protestant* and *protestantism*¹. No subsequent movement, nor its followers, were given those names. Similarly the word *dissent* stood for the ideas and activities of such sects as the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, and the Quakers, who dissented as much from some of the doctrines of the Protestant Church as they did from its government, both resulting in definite political acts. The word *dissent* specifically

meant the events and their protagonists in that part of British political history (1831-52) in which the dissenting sects called, inside and outside Parliament, for the intervention of the State to put an end to the excessive corruption in the Established Church. The constitutional history of England from 1832 to 1857 was in parts the history of dissent on certain issues, of which the more important were the question of tithe, which had created in English rural people areas of darkest anti-clerical feelings from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards; the compulsory Anglican marriage ceremony; the Church's squandering of the vast ecclesiastical revenues; and the exclusion of dissenters from the Universities.² The word *reform* stood for the significant changes, made periodically, and by the public will, in the political structure of public institutions, such as the Church, Parliament, and the Magistracy.

Now, despite this background of these words in a different historical context, researchers in India have been looking for instances in their own society of protest, dissent and reform. They have found examples of Buddhism and Jainism; of the *bhakti* saints, of Sikhism, and of the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and Gandhism. These, they argue, are only the more famous examples of a tradition of dissent, protest and reform in Indian civilization, for the tradition, according to them, continues to this day. But no serious attempt is made to examine what, if anything at all, was there in common between the events in the West signified by the words dissent, protest and reform and those in Indian history to which we chose to apply them. Perhaps, this failure is largely because of the 'dharmic use of ambiguity', i.e., where no word has a definite boundary and may mean several things at the same time. Moreover, we give to words prescriptive definitions, not what words mean in historical usage, but rather what they ought to mean, independent of history. (Some of the papers presented in this seminar—Malik and Damle's—on conceptual themes are very abstract all through; they illustrate the prescriptive use of the words dissent, protest and reform, unrelated to any historical experience, European or Indian).

The difficulty with such prescriptions is that they all may be valid, or invalid, and, hence, incapable of being proved false. If so, it means that they cannot be discussed meaningfully. This can be made clearer by another example. In answer to the question, 'What is philosophy?', an endless variety of prescriptive definitions are offered to the students, which may be right, or may be wrong. There is no way of telling. The only way of answering that question is, of course, to find out what kind of problems the philosophers have in fact been concerned with. The kind of activity philosophers have generally been engaged in is "What is philosophy?". Similarly protest, dissent, and reform can only mean what they meant in history. When they have come to be used in the West in a more extended sense, even that sense is not divorced from history, nor is it contrary to it. But if Indian academics conceptualize protest, dissent, and reform in an unhistorical fashion, all kinds of movements

in Indian history, from Buddhism down to the DMK movement, will always be wrongly discussed as examples of these phenomena.

If the academia is unmindful of the words it uses, not seeing the incorrect understanding it leads to, the market-place politician quickly finds a use for that misuse. So that, every agitation, however misguided, is called protest! Every criticism of the Government, however uninformed, is called dissent. But it is also true that, however marginal, in point of fact changing little, many governmental programmes have been called reforms. Thus we give wrong identity to public events. The country saw not long ago agitations that were intellectually flabby; morally uncertain; and practically destructive; but everywhere they were offered as examples of vital protest and dissent. Similarly, there is the misuse of the word *secularism*. Our national policy is to keep the state aloof from any particular religion, create conditions where all religions may be freely practised, and, most important, to prevent religious strife from disrupting public peace. Considering how religious violence has in the past destroyed life and property in India, all thinking persons ought to work towards that goal of preventing disruption of public peace; but to do that is not the same as to work towards secularism. It creates confusion when that goal is called secularism and in the same breath it is added that secularism is not anti-religion, when in the past three or four centuries of European history, where it originated it has been precisely that—anti-religion. The tradition of secularism in modern Europe represents that body of thought which rejects the idea of God as necessary both to explain the world and to change it, and puts man at the centre of all explanations concerning man. Naturally it regards religion (with violence and superstition as its integral parts) as the chief obstacle to man rising to his true stature. This, evidently, is not what the Indian leaders mean by secularism; what they mean is equal toleration of all religions, which is a perfectly lucid idea in itself. Then, why call it secularism, which evokes an altogether different order of thought, a word charged with the history of man's regeneration?

Thus, all knowledge is historical, in the sense that the use of words is contextual, and it is through words that we relate ourselves to reality. So, if we misuse words, we misconceive reality. This is a view which philosophers might very well contest, pointing out not only to logic as an instance of thought independent of history, but also to the fact that there is no way in any case of knowing reality as such, and that words, even if correctly used, are only approximations to it. It is presumed that historians and sociologists will have little difficulty in accepting the view, that knowledge is contextual, as something essential to their disciplines.

The second point arises directly from the first. If we did not have in our history anything which would respond when called by the words protest, dissent and reform, does it follow that we did not have the phenomenon of social challenge? By what name must we, then, call the movements started

by Buddha, Nanak, Swami Dayanand, Mahatma Gandhi and Ramaswami Naicker, to mention only a few in the long line of those who posed social challenges? This is, again, not a semantic problem; just as the objection to the loose use of words that arose in the Western experience is not a semantic objection. The question, 'How may we call our own movements?', is perhaps, already a wrong question. The question is rather one of understanding their nature, their scope, and the total effect of the social conflict they generated. These may be studied, with reference to two main questions. The first: Which among our cultural presuppositions as regards man and his social situation did they challenge? The second: Precisely what change did they bring in the collective effect of our values? My view is that they did not bring any change in a manner that altered the collective character. If this is so, what may then be further studied, what is there in the Indian soil or if you wish, in the Indian sky, which neutralizes all social conflict and makes every occasion for decisive change in our social consciousness a waste? In order to answer these questions, one has to study historically the nature of what I call 'Dharmic society', which is what Indian society basically is.

One feature of it which is of direct relevance here consists in authority being placed as the arbiter of what is truth and the custom of excellence, and both being endued with elements of the divine, so that, authority and hierarchy are more than functional arrangements. And since custom sanctions that position, in India submission to authority is as much a way to spiritual salvation as to worldly good. This attitude to authority to which we are deeply conditioned produces, at the one end of the cultural spectrum, willing slaves, and at the other, pontificating gurus. A more satisfactory metaphor will be that they are the two sides of the same coin; one does not exist without the other. There has never been in this society an authentic tradition of protest and dissent, not only for the reason that it is a pluralistic society, but also because there was not in it a tradition of public limit on the exercise of authority, whether theocratic or royal. Limits there were, but they did not originate in the will of the people. And that is important to remember. This view may certainly be challenged. For the time being, it will suffice to say that if public check on the exercise of authority is the very essence of democracy, however differently practised, responsible protest and dissent, as expressed for centuries in parts of the West, is the very name of that check.

But there can be no protest and dissent in the 'Dharmic society', where not only is nothing definite, and everything is blurred by ambiguity, but where authority is accepted also as the source of all knowledge. Now can there be protest and dissent in a society where all kinds of thought are permissible, and flourish, not because there is real tolerance, but because thought itself has been neutralized, and made socially powerless. By achieving this the 'Dharmic society' achieved the most extraordinary totalitarianism — where it was not necessary to punish heretical thought. Punishment for heresy, often with death, in what are generally called totalitarian countries is a firm,

though cruel, acknowledgement of the power of thought. Here, in the 'Dharmic society', thought has really no power in so far as it has become either a ritual or an art-form. It is the tradition that has power. This country's history has repeatedly confirmed the truth of this. We are radical, and in a most admirably lucid fashion too, in our public image; in our private behaviour, we follow tradition. The example of Mahadev Govind Ranade may be given here. When his first wife died, everybody thought that he would marry a widow and an adult, since he so passionately championed widow remarriage and abolition of child marriage. Not only did he not marry a widow, but married a girl who was barely ten years of age. When questioned as to the apparent insincerity of his conduct he pleaded that he acted according to the will of his father, against whose decision he could not go. Naturally Ranade drew upon himself much ridicule from his contemporaries. Worse, the social reform movement, already under attack for varying reasons, got discredited further. No word at that time came to be charged with more contempt than *sudharak*.

Unthinking opposition to authority is no part of democracy; but nor is unquestioning submission to it any part of progress. The one leads to futile paroxysm; the other to a deadened society. The melancholy truth about India is that both exist side by side, and indeed feed each other. It is the duty of our academic class to make this clear to the people, not in the abstract, but with reference to India's history. The first condition to achieving this, is to call a thing by its right name. Call a thing by a wrong name, and the revenge shall be upon you. Who among us may not share the disaster when wrong things are called protest, dissent and reform? For all manners of forces will answer them—some of them malevolent.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 See the article on "Protestantism" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.
- 2 For details see Norman Gash, *Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics—1832-52*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1965, p. 60-118. The dissent literature quoted there may also be consulted.

Discussion

on Paper by C Badrinath

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Any number of references may be given of books which are a devastating criticism of the what Badrinath calls the 'Dharmic society'. This comment may be noted. Most papers at the seminar have taken off from Hindu society, which, if one compares it with Islamic and Christian society, is different. The ideological instrument of social control in Christianity and Islam are doctrinal, whereas the instruments of social control of Hindu society are structural in nature. An example of this may be that as long as one marries in the caste one belongs to, no one else is really concerned. This is why when we discuss the problem of dissent, it is difficult to be very clear up although since the phenomenon does exist here, we have to define dissent, protest and reform in the Indian context. But I disagree with Badrinath when he says that unless we look at these terms in the historical context, we cannot define them. To illustrate changing meanings take the word revolution. In the 14th century it had a completely different sense than what it does now in the social sciences. It then referred to a secular or a religious process, and the Greeks also referred to it in this context. Therefore, while it may be of interest to go into its original meanings, we must see what meaning the contemporary language of social sciences gives to this word or in what other specific contexts which may then be related to the concrete problems of today.

S C MALIK/ After all the strong criticism, we expected Badrinath to give alternatives to the words dissent, protest and reform. I believe we are already aware of the historical connotations, especially since this problem was discussed in the Conference held last year. But no alternatives could be suggested. Badrinath himself falls back on these words. This cancels out his argument entirely. Similarly since the idea of historicity is itself a European idea, how valid is his talk about the writing of history in terms of dates and chronology. If we follow this line of thinking can we talk about anything in the Indian context at all? In other words, it is of course very essential to have a frame-

work validated by us, even if it comes out of the West, if only to have a starting point. Later we could think of terms in Indian categories. The reference to the academics and intellectuals by Badrinath is also a European concept. If we follow this logic, we may end up discussing nothing, since which aspect of India is *truly* Indian?

S C MISRA/ Basically words do arise out of a historical context, and to know the exact meanings of the words is all very well. But are we to be imprisoned in that meaning without taking into account the changing context? Because knowledge is contextual, words and terms do tend to be used in different contexts. The best we can do is to be clear about our definitions, and not be simply bound by the historical meaning of the word. We should be free to use them in historical and sociological analyses. For example, take the word 'feudalism'. In very early analysis I thought that feudalism like many other phenomena did not exist, in medieval times in India, i.e., when compared to medieval Europe and Britain. But, lately, on rethinking and seeking the components which comprise feudalism, I have begun to recognize them in the Indian historical situation. In this way one can visualize feudalism not only in India but also in China. This is one way to make comparisons of differing historical experiences. Of course, each historical experience is unique. But in that case there can be no comparisons and generalizations or any attempt to involve laws or processes; and then, there can be no knowledge. Therefore, even an arbitrary exercise of looking into situations which may be termed as those of dissent, protest and reform in the Indian situation is very valid; no doubt bearing in mind the historical context of the words and the names. The point to note is that there should be a logical consistency in our formulations, rather than suggesting that we do not use the words at all.

S C DUBE/ Badrinath was referring to the cognitive confusion which arises with the use of words without taking into account the native categories of thought. Meanings should not be superimposed.

J S GREWAL/ Endorsing the views of Ravinder Kumar, Misra and Malik, it is clear that there has been historical change, and most of it was not a conscious one. We also find that some changes were brought about by protagonists of movements against the privileged established order. In this context of the experience these words arising in the European context do have a certain meaning for our discussions. The basic point is of consistency in our arguments.

K M GEORGE/ As a Protestant linguist, while the historical concept has to be kept in mind, I would say Badrinath's argument is not valid. Meanings do not get frozen in time; words continue to change. These words, for instance, existed much earlier than when they came into the context of Christianity which gave meanings which were often contrary. Therefore, we should use the words in the way we define them.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ From Badrinath's presentation, I was expecting that from the etymology he would come to present day meanings of the words. But these he only did in the case of secularism and intellectual. He should have really defined what was dissent, protest and reform. His argument, however, breaks down because he does not deny the phenomena in the Indian context. He again contradicts himself, later on, when he says, that there was no protest or dissent while referring to Ranade. But one could as well clearly give examples to counter the example of Ranade's, such as Vishnu Shastri's. The logic of the argument really is this; while dissent and protest did exist at the intellectual level, it is crucial to see how these were transformed in terms of social action. In any case, it seems he is willing to use without defining them in the Indian context.

LEELA DUBE/ The looseness in the use of words is not common to India alone, but to the social sciences. This is because we use common, everyday words for concepts and definitions. The changing meaning of a word should be taken into account for such changes occur the case of all words.

K J SHAH/ With reference to *Shankaracharyas* in various institutes in India, is this simply a hangover of the religious attitude or is there something else which makes the director a *Shankaracharya*? I think that there is something else which makes him a *Shankaracharya*; because neither the director nor the others are often concerned with questions, about India with which they should be concerned. If you are not concerned with the right sort of questions you feel out the questioner's weakness, and respond in such a way that you do not raise much trouble. Generally in this situation the director and the others wish to exist on the weaknesses of each other. This is also our strong point, and this is how the whole thing goes on. Thus, raising the right questions for change or continuity has been neglected in India. If the function of the intellectual is to articulate consciousness and knowledge, this is not done. Consequently, it is pertinent to note that since Badrinath does not raise right questions and continues to discuss the 'Dharmic society', there can be no answers to his questions. This society does have questions which, if you ask, then, will elicit both support and opposition, and even punishment. If you talk as an outsider without referring to the right questions, then the result is as you see it, indifference. Therefore, not raising the right questions, is a major failure of all of us.

S C DUBE/ The point is that though we have to use Indian categories and need a common language, we cannot continue a dialogue in 22 languages. What we have to be careful about is the use of the native categories of thought. This is valid for the intellectual process not only in India but in the 'Third World'. We have to break out of what may be called the 'captive mind', i.e., we have to try to fit categories of our experiences within our framework.

What Shah refers to as our difficulty, is real. But much depends on the kinds of meanings you invest into certain categories of thought that are universal. While science may be universal, societies are particular. Placing this particular spirit into a universal context is of a great value, and is utilized in the social sciences.

The second point about intellectuals has something which has a deep relevance to the sociology of knowledge, where you really try to relate knowledge to action. This dilemma of the intellectuals and bureaucracy is true in India, for we have to relate ourselves to the concrete reality and not talk about terms in the abstract.

The points about 'Dharmic society', of authority, and hierarchy is not really relevant but may be discussed. This is specially in reference to little *Shankaracharyas*. The whole ethos is such that the director has to be a little *Shankaracharya*, either as a father figure or a shock absorber. Today, real commitment is rare, and radicalism, dissent, and protest are often a stance. This is why, perhaps, alternatives should be provided.

RESPONSE

C BADRINATH/ The point put forward by Shah is very pertinent, i.e., asking the wrong questions, and should be borne in mind with reference to what others have said about the meanings of words and so on. I did not mean we should always use them in the manner in which they were used first. What I was referring to has been stated by Dube, i.e., we must bear in mind the native categories of thought. I wanted to warn against the dangers in the use of the words dissent, protest and reform in a changed context that may distort reality. With reference to Dube's remarks, bureaucracy does control every aspect of our lives, since bureaucrats are not concerned with facts but with slogans. On the question of authority and hierarchy this dependence must be broken somehow. I plead helplessness in providing alternatives as suggested by Malik, and others, though the phenomenon exists. Paradoxically it is a very complex problem because the thing changes in the manner of saying it. The point is to use language carefully.

S C Misra

Dissent, Protest and Reform : A Note on Definitions

RELIGION, AT ONE LEVEL, IS BASICALLY PERSONAL AND EXISTENTIAL, i.e., IT IS individual response to what is divine and sacred, and from this response follows the approach not only to the unknown but also consequently to the basic values of the organization of life itself. Yet each man does not discover his religion, he accepts it by a process of socialization in which the individual given the tools of cognition discovers himself in society. In this institutionalization, the religious system is composed of a number of elements constituting a belief system that forms the basis of a network of social relationships specially in pre-industrial societies, supporting and validating a privileged order, or political system.

However, institutionalization in such a form, while claiming validity from ultimate experience—revelation, experience, miracles—grows distant when it prescribes a way of life which is to be followed, even when it is not fully understood. This is when symbols become important and get ritualized. While initially the meaning of symbols and ritual may be simple and explicit to the followers, as the distinction between the laity and the priesthood becomes pronounced, rituals become more and more esoteric, to be followed more as usage and custom than as existential verities. There then emerges a class or an institution, with a charismatic role, which interprets and directs the exercise of piety and mediates between the individual and the divine. It acquires a vested interest in the mysteries of religion, and thereby social and economic privilege.

The pre-requisite for this class or institution is a certain prescribed way of life marked by piety and asceticism—a way which would distinguish it from the laity and entitle it to regard and reverence by the laity. It is supposed to acquire a charisma from its contact with the transcendental, from its asceticism, even from its deep study of the sacred lore. And as such, this class serves not only as the mentor of the laity, but also as the interpreter of the

sacred law, and above all, as the legitimizing agency of privilege and power. In an established religion, this class can support only established privilege, and treat rebellion as heresy and condemn its partisans not only to the scaffold but also to hell. However, at this point, the merger of sects and splinter forms can be said to cohere with economic cleavage.

In general, religious dissent is felt by certain sensitive individuals at the stage when the *official* version of faith, more in practice than in theory, is seen to be less than genuine, wrapped in worldliness and shrouded in a miasma of ritualism and beliefs which are at variance with the original formulation. Further, the culture bearers of the faith, the charismatic group and/or institutions seem to have lost their charisma; and, owing to their corruption, their obsession with privilege benefits their title to guide the laity.

The rejection thus encompasses not only the privileged body or institution which was seen as the sole mediating agency between the individual and the transcendental, it also includes the gamut of accretions, dogmas, beliefs and practices which are believed to have adulterated the original content and misled the ignorant into error. The recent past is thus negated; the distant past is recalled to provide sanction for the rejuvenation of the true faith. The basis of this appeal is experience interpreted by an individual, the new prophet, who in turn assumes a charismatic role for his associates and followers. He evaluates the practices of the established faith on the basis of his own and similar experiences; the tool of evaluation is reason and rationality. The goal of the *new preaching* is to create a genuine article, a more sincere and satisfying version.

Dissent, as defined above, thus has strong elements of revivalism; in fact, it often can and does become revivalism. But this may not be so if it accepts certain elements of the earlier faith and adds to them certain others which are such reinterpretations of the earlier forms by a logic of the Master that they stand at variance with the cardinal features. Integrated into a new belief system, the emergent syndrome is itself accepted as a new order, challenging the old.

Another characteristic which might define dissent is its attitude towards the earlier system. Revivalist forms perceive themselves as a part of the earlier system, as reformist groups. They affirm both the basic values of the belief system and most of its social and privilege orders. They do not as such question the system, but believe that if only some of its *corrupt* parts were excised, together with the rejection of illegitimate practices, the system would be restored to its original shape, and to health and credibility. In this sense, both dissent and revivalism are reform movements, since these take into consideration the lacunae of the existing system, its failure to provide the satisfaction needed by a section of the followers. Thus, both seek to reform it, to change it to suit their requirements, in terms of experience and its interpretation for their legitimization. Both call for a more genuine faith and more genuine practitioners of that faith than had been the case earlier.

Dissent however seeks to go farther, to question the more basic fundamentals of the belief system. It urges for a deep-satisfying faith, which is activated not only by the perceived inequities and injustices of the social order but also by a spiritual thirst—the latter often begins within the Master who feels deeply disquietened by the wordly practitioners and their indifference to real values. This is why dissent movements have the potentiality to form into independent belief systems, viable in their own right. Revivalist movements lack this potentiality, unless they are fortified by a subsequent leader who injects fresh life into the movement by giving it a new direction. Nevertheless, it can form only a sect, without creating a belief system, i.e., it can reform but not cut its moorings.

Reform can be viewed primarily in a social context. In a doctrinal context reform is, of course, possible in its literal sense. Both dissent and revivalist movements are reform movements. Nevertheless, reform in history has been primarily with reference to a society. Like revivalism, reform operates within the bounds of the existing system—including socio-economic contours, ethical, normative standards—most of whose values it accepts. It challenges only a sector of this system mainly on the grounds of expedient efficiency. Its logic is the logic of the system for what is sought to be excised or altered only has surface value, i.e., the understanding is that what is being changed is dispensable for the system, and what is being suggested to be replaced would lead to an overall healthier functioning of the system. Reform movements thus do not propose to wreck the system but propose to diagnose its malaise and treat it back to health. These movements are largely formed of people who have no quarrel with the privilege distribution of the system—with its system of deprivation—other than its functioning in certain sectors. The reformers thus have a stake in the system either as vested interests or as clients.

Reform is thus unlike revolutionary movements which are to be distinguished by the presupposition of sweeping change, primarily in the system of privileges, in the ethico-legal framework, i.e., in the power complex and its legitimacy. Obviously, such a thoroughgoing effect which seeks overall displacement cannot be supported by the privileged sector of the existing system. A revolution is seldom engineered by the dispossessed in whose favour it is supposed to be, for it is often brought about by a small group of highly dedicated, ideologically convinced men who belong to an unstable transitional class. While both revolutionaries and reformers perceive the weakness of the system, its imbalance and inequities, the former unlike the latter seek redress and therapy of the malaise not in superficial treatment but in a deep and thoroughgoing surgery in order to replace the existing system with a fresh, and what they feel, a more logical and fair order.

Reform movements and revolutionary movements surface in societies which suffer from both mild imbalances and deeply ingrained, fundamental contradictions. Revolutionary movements have more chances to succeed in the latter, in societies whose troubles defy the mild therapy of the reformer. For, in such

societies, the rulers and the privileged sectors tend to get isolated from the rest of the society; the economic dynamism produces anomic relationships which tend to destroy the viability of the system. In contrast, dissent movements are prevalent usually at the intellectual and ideological levels, i.e., in the cultural areas. The ideological and cultural sector has to be distinguished from the social, and both of these from the economic.

Thus, dissent may be discerned as discussed above, primarily in the religious field, in terms of a dissatisfaction felt vis-a-vis the culture bearers of the religious system. The dissatisfaction naturally does not obviously remain confined to the doctrinaire or ideological spheres alone; it rapidly extends to attack the privilege system which has supported and made possible this indifference towards real values. What is thus questioned is the questionable exercise of the religion-sanctioned functions, observances and rituals allegedly fabricated for the benefit of the beneficiary classes by these classes themselves; illegitimate acquisition of privileges, and above all, the power and wealth which have accrued to these classes by virtue of their hold on the levers of privilege.

But when dissent assumes the dimensions of a thoroughgoing public attack on the privilege system, it assumes the proportions of a protest movement. Its leader or leaders acquire a charisma, a holiness not only because of their disdain for the worldliness for which they attack the existing beneficiaries, their critique of the existing system but also because of their insistence on a real and existential faith and their own lives in which they live their faith. Protest movements now have a charismatic leadership, a devoted, often fanatic, sometimes militant following, a religious scripture and exegesis and an insistent code of conduct. Protest movements are thus public movements; they are not contained in any sanhedrim, consistory or denominational gathering forums where internal dissent may be voiced and settled. Briefly, thus, protest subsumes action and action in turn subsumes in historical terms, public action. The prerequisites for public action are leadership, ideology, following and expression. Dissent, on the other hand, may be individual or it may be shared, but so long as it remains primarily at the ideational level and does not pose an active threat to the establishment, it may not be classified as protest. An element of challenge, of defiance is thus an essential part of protest. However, protest has in turn to be based on dissent as an ideology, i.e., it has to have a content in terms of its positive content and criticism. Without this, it becomes deviance not protest. Deviance is not protest, for it believes in what it violates; even at its most idealistic level it is an act against an individual and not a system because it may be based on a sense of personal grievance which has not been abstracted to the level of a cause.

Likewise rebellions or dynastic coups do not qualify as protest movements, for in either case they do not challenge the system since their aim is to acquire the privileged position by ousting the incumbents or by coercing them to accept their position. In either case, there is no threat, real or implicit to the system;

nor is there either dissent or any ideological moorings. The same is true of legitimist succession disputes either in monarchical systems or in religious systems. These do not constitute a protest, for in both cases the claims of a disputant are legitimate in terms of an existing order to which he appeals. Of course, rebellions of a certain sort may be protest movements as when personal discontent merges with an ideological belief system. The protest is thus felt to be not only against a manifest injustice, an oppressive act or a series of acts by the rulers but it also denies the validity of the ruler's acts. This challenge or protest is based upon an ethical framework which is a part of an emergent religious system, or it is sustained by a shared system which is believed to have been violated by the rulers. In the latter case, the rulers are believed by the rebels to have lost their charisma, their legitimization, their right to rule, and as such, the rebels have a moral right, in fact a duty to overthrow them. However, protest movements do not also have to be dissent movements if the rulers and the rebels share the same ethos and value systems. They may qualify as protest movements only in terms of violent reactions against some acts or policies of the rulers. But this should not be specifically oriented for the benefit of some individual. In other words, they are policy-oriented, not individual-oriented, so that the actual issues are clear and without ideological overtones.

In conclusion, it may be mentioned that the types sketched here are ideal types; in actual historical occurrence two or more types may tend to cohere and a single movement may present elements derived from several of these types.

M S A Rao

Themes in the Ideology of Protest Movements

EVERY SOCIETY IS SUBJECT TO DISSENT AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS. BECAUSE conflict is as much a part of society as order, movements organized around protest play a significant part in bringing about social change. They develop ideologies which act as a driving force in political mobilization. These ideologies reflect diverse themes of protest, and some of these are discussed here. But before doing so, it is necessary to clarify the usage of the relevant terms: movement, dissent, protest, reform and ideology.

A movement in contrast to sporadic occurrences of public gatherings is based on some interest on the one hand and individual action on the other. It implies sustained pursuit of shared interest, and collective action which is either organized or spontaneous. A movement which is spontaneous in the beginning may become organized later on, by centring round a leader or leaders. The process of social mobilization includes meetings, campaigns, demonstrations, conferences, literature which are expressive of interests and beliefs. Interest which is immediate in terms of motivation and demands, is rooted in a more fundamental belief system which we shall call an ideology. Ideology not only provides the motivating force but also defines the aims and objectives of the movement. The objectives normally imply effective changes in the existing situation or the social order. A movement implies change, whatever may be its nature, although there could be movements which are oriented towards maintaining the *status quo*. Thus, the three basic elements of a movement are collective action, ideology and interest, and an orientation towards change.

Dissent and protest form part of the formative processes of a movement, whereas reform refers to the ideology and consequences of a movement. Taking the ideology-consequence aspect first, it is necessary to make a three-level distinction; reform, transformation and revolution. These represent the three degrees of structural changes in a progressive manner, but not in any evolutionary sense.

Often a distinction is made in sociological literature between structural changes and organizational changes. The former refers to changes in the totality of relationships, positions and their arrangements; and the latter signifies changes in the activities and personnel from one position to another. This distinction we feel is naive since it blocks our understanding of the nature of social change. In this framework a structural change occurs only when there is a black and white distinction, i.e., a society which was feudalistic or capitalistic becomes socialistic through a revolution or because of a violent change. Such a dichotomous position views structural change only as a break-off point, while it considers different degrees or processes under the category of organizational change. It is obviously wrong to consider changes which have altered the quality of original relationships in certain areas of life as organizational. This is why it is necessary to distinguish different levels of structural changes, reform, transformation and revolution. Reform refers to changes which have occurred in the ideology and have disturbed the traditional system of social relations oriented to a new system of relationships. Transformatory changes refer to actual change of positions and relationships in terms of command and control over resources, benefits and persons, in some areas of social life. Revolutionary changes refer to total, clear-cut and sudden changes in the system of relations in all of the areas of social life.

In short, reform refers to one of the responses to alter the existing situation. Dissent expresses dissatisfaction with the existing situation and registers disagreement. Protest is a formal declaration of dissent and represents a more confirmed state of opposition and conflict. Historically protest movements have been associated with the Reformation of the sixteenth century in Europe, involving Western churches which protested against Roman Catholicism; hence Protestants. Generally protest and dissent form a part of confrontation, resistance, opposition, and conflict which are expressed in such different modes as demonstration, agitation, revolt and revolution. Thus, dissent and protest in their formative aspect form a part of the ideology of a movement. Dissent and protest far from being sporadic and disjointed, shape themselves into an ideology as a symbolic system. Ideology searches for new sources of legitimacy and rationalizes both activity and motivation.

We may further clarify the meaning of a movement by distinguishing different kinds of movements. There have been several attempts at the classification of movements, based on different criteria. One of the important criterion is ideology or end-result or both. Based on this, movements are classified into protest, reformatory, transformatory, revolutionary, revitalization, millenarian (or millennial, messianic) and *status quo* maintaining ones. They may also be classified on the basis of the social group in which they originate, viz., religious, sectarian, caste, peasant, tribal, feminist, regional or linguistic movements. Again, their classification may be based on the nature and spread of their organization, such as some are regional while others are all-India. Similarly, while some movements are associated with single leaders, others have

highly developed bureaucratic organizations. Yet another criterion is internal schisms, i.e., the main movement in the course of time generally tends to develop internal schisms and conflicts, giving rise to splinter or schematic movements, which deviate from their respective main movements.

It is thus quite clear, and necessary to stress that any classification of movements is bound to remain inadequate, for every movement tends to acquire new features in its career, and the placement remains relative to the phase of development. Classifications only provide broad guidelines for further analysis. Further, multiple criteria of classification yield different types whereas in actual fact, the criteria overlap. However, for us the criterion of ideology and end-result are the most critical ones in defining the nature and scope of any movement whereas the other criteria help to define the internal structure and organization. This is why the paper now dwells more on the ideology-consequence aspect of protest movements.

Ideology as a symbolic system¹ projects self images of the concerned groups. It helps towards the codification of beliefs and myths in order to define their aspirations and responses to reality. It also fulfils the need to interpret the surroundings and to legitimize action. Ideology then is closely related to the problem of identity, i.e., the way in which a group perceives itself in relation to other relevant groups and vice-versa.

The ideology of protest movements is mainly characterized by relative deprivation. Although the concept of relative deprivation was used by Karl Marx, it gained in importance in the study of protest movements in the forties. There have been two distinct trends in the development of the concept. The first is the one that was initially used by the authors of *The American Soldier*², but developed by Merton³ and Runciman⁴. The second trend was represented by Aberle⁵ and others. While the former uses it in the context of stratification and mobility, the latter rightly applies it to the study of movements. Relative deprivation which is perceived by a group of people in respect of their economic, political, educational and ethnic positions, acts as the bed-rock of protest movements.

The notion of relative deprivation is also used somewhat loosely to include individual deprivations in its psychological dimensions. For instance, a person who has a teak bedstead may feel a sense of deprivation when compared to one who has one made of silver. Such situations of personal deprivation are frivolous and endless. However, if the notion is used in the context of the basic rights of groups in political participation, access to employment, education and places of worship, it becomes meaningful, and, the ideology based on it acts as the motivating force for social mobilization. Leadership is highly significant both in the formulation of the ideology and in translating it into the idiom of the masses for political mobilization.

We may now proceed to identify different empirical situations of relative deprivation and analyze the formation of protest ideology based on it. Protest movements have occurred all along in the history of Indian civilization. The Buddha was one of the first to have revolted against the supremacy of the Brahmins and the Vedas as the source of knowledge of the ultimate reality, which to him was void, could be experienced and understood outside the Vedas. Hence he discarded the validity of the Vedas and upheld the path of right conduct and inward experience. Buddhism attacked the monopoly of the Brahmins in respect of sacred knowledge and placed the Kshatriyas first in the hierarchy of the caste system, replacing the Brahmins.

The rise of the devotional movements both among the Vaishnavite and Saivaite sects should be looked upon as protest movements against the paths of knowledge and action which were the monopoly of certain sections of the Brahmins. The masses were deprived of these paths which had become highly specialized and closed. The devotional movements upheld the path of devotion which could be followed by all, irrespective of caste and sectarian differences. They also replaced Sanskrit by the vernacular languages, and this led to a significant development of devotional literature in different regional languages.

While some devotional movements were mainly interested in doctrinal changes others had significant social and cultural consequences.⁶ For instance, the Haridasa movement in Karnataka among the Madhwa Brahmins in the fourteenth century led to doctrinal changes, and the creation of an order of musician saints and devotional institutions which were in competition with the monastic orders of the sanyasis at the intellectual level. Whereas the Veerasaiva movement was founded in the twelfth century, it developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to bring about not only doctrinal changes but also far-reaching changes in the social order. The movement was militant in its anti-Brahminical ideology. It emphasized the devotional path and also built up an order for sanyasis, monasteries and priests which was parallel to that of the Brahmins. The learned scholars, saint-poets and singers produced a rich literature of the philosophy of Veerasaivism, a new set of domestic rituals, an ethical code of conduct, and poems and songs. The ideology attracted the masses belonging to diverse castes who became its followers. There were also several occasions of confrontation and conflict between the Veerasaivas and the Brahmins.

Protest movements in pre-British India were largely characterized by their concern with religious beliefs and practices, as those constituted the chief area of relative deprivation. Brahminical Hinduism had established a monopoly over paths of salvation and denied the common man access to them. An awareness of the deprivation grew in different degrees among various sections including the Brahmins and the untouchables. The path of devotion provided the double-edged ideology of establishing equality of all men in relation to God on the one hand and attacking the monopoly and supremacy of certain

sections of Brahmans over Vedic knowledge and action, as the source of salvation, on the other. In so far as the devotional movements abrogated the criterion of birth, they brought about a significant change in the principles of purity and pollution underlying the caste system.

An awareness of deprivation in the economic, political, civic and educational areas of life developed on a widespread scale during British rule. Protest movements in this period reflect these concerns along with religious dimensions. The introduction of *Pax Britannica* may be considered as the watershed of many structural changes because now the basic idea of individual liberty and social equality got circulated. The English educational system, along with its legal and administrative system all encouraged the spread of the secular egalitarian ideology. The National Movement buttressed these ideas and helped the backward classes (Depressed Classes and others) to fight for their basic rights in the diverse areas of social life. The Backward Classes movements that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exemplify diverse themes in their protest ideology. One can identify five themes in the protest ideology of the Backward Classes movements.

First, many castes claimed a higher *varna* status by developing suitable mythologies of origin. For instance, the *Ahirs* and other cognate castes claimed Kshatriya status as Yadavas. Yadava became a category consisting of several cognate castes such as *Ahirs* in many parts of north India, *Gopas* in Bengal, *Gautis* in Maharashtra, *Gollas* in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and *Korars* in Tamil Nadu. They follow such diverse occupations as milk selling, cattle tending, and cultivation, to form about ten per cent of India's population. All of them claim descent from the *Yadava* dynasty (a famous Kshatriya dynasty in Hindu mythology) to which Lord Krishna belonged. In the second decade of the present century they organized themselves into an all-India Yadava association. In some parts of north India, especially Bihar, the Yadavas came into direct conflict with Bhomihar Brahmans, when the former donned sacred threads (*savarna* caste symbol) publicly.⁷

The point in such attempts to claim a higher *varna* status was to raise their self-image and to gain self-respect, honour and esteem. This was not a process of imitation but a process of aggression by which they challenged the monopoly of the upper castes in the use of religious goods and services of Brahminical Hinduism from which they had been kept out for centuries. Thus, when Yadavas donned the sacred thread—a symbol of highest ritual status—they were not imitating but challenging the monopoly of the caste Hindus; this was borne out by the ensuing confrontation where the latter attempted to resist the former in order to maintain the *status quo*.

A second theme in the protest ideology is withdrawal and self-organization. Such an ideology was developed by the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana movement among the Izhavas (toddy tappers) of Kerala, who formed about 20 per cent of the total Kerala population and have suffered from many religious, economic, educational and political disabilities. The Izhavas earlier belonged

to the Scheduled Caste category, and were considered to be unapproachables by the clean castes. Around the turn of the century a charismatic leader, Sri Narayana Guru Swamy gave them the new ideology of one God, one religion and one caste. This transformed their life-styles and outlook. He established a set of religious institutions (temples, priesthood, ashramas, sanyasins, household disciples) parallel to that of the teetotal and vegetarian variety of Braminical Hinduism. This helped the Izhavas, both to gain self-respect and also to adopt a militant ideology to challenge the religious, economic, educational and the political supremacy of the upper castes.

A third variety of protest ideology was to deny the supremacy of the Brahminical Aryan religion. The Dravida Kazhagam movement in Madras idealized the Dravidian culture and religion and attacked the Aryan culture and religion.⁸ For the followers of the DK, Ravana is virtuous whereas Rama is wicked. The self-respect movement started by Ramaswamy Naicker advocated that they should be their own priests. The movement drew its main support from the low-castes/classes. It worked hard to escape the tyranny of the Brahmans and their culture, and to extol the virtues of the Dravidian culture and religion. In the extreme form the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam presses for separatism from the Union.

The Mahar movement exemplifies a fourth theme of protest ideology, viz., abandoning Hinduism altogether, and embracing Neo-Buddhism. Mahars form an important section of the Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra, constituting about ten per cent of the population. They have acted as village watchmen, messengers, removers of cattle carcasses and such other services that were hereditary; and were paid in kind—a piece of *waten* land. Mahars have also been weavers, petty traders, carpenters and cultivators. Thus, they occupied a low position in the caste and occupational hierarchy, and as such suffered from many religious, economic, educational and political disabilities.

In the late eighteenth century Mahars entered the British Indian Army in large numbers and they provided one of the sources of leadership to organize against the upper castes. The earliest Conference of Mahars was organized in 1903. Moreover, another source of leadership came from the newly emerging school teachers. The Mahar movement in its earlier phase developed an ideology of claim to Kshatriya *varna* as a martial race. But this was soon dropped in favour of an independent secular ideology of confrontation based on democratic principles under the leadership of Ambedkar in the thirties. Ambedkar vacillated between the two themes to fight against the discriminations imposed by the upper castes: whether to stay within the Hindu religion or to abandon Hinduism altogether. However, in 1956 Ambedkar resolved the religious dilemma by accepting Buddhism and abandoning Hinduism, which also meant the giving up of caste. A large number of his followers embraced Buddhism which upheld egalitarian values, and also at the same time remained within the Indian tradition.⁹

This ideology of the Mahar movement reflects the total rejection of a religion which is identified with hierarchy and inequality; this being the religion of the caste Hindus. It also reflects the message of new identity by which the Mahars now belong to a religion which stands for egalitarian values and is hence superior to that of the caste Hindus. It is another strategy to gain self-respect and esteem on the one hand and to negate or protest against the religion of the upper castes on the other.

Fifth and finally while all these ideologies of identity have, in one way or the other, a religious dimension, the ideology of Dalit Panthers reflects a combination of anti-caste Hindu theme and the new leftist revolutionary philosophy. Dalit Panthers, fashioned after Black Panthers, emerged in 1972 among the Mahars of Bombay and Poona. Its spokesmen are Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and J V Powar—all eminent literary men. The movement cashes on the frustrations of the urban youth, around the diverse forms of discrimination against the untouchables and the oppressed. According to its manifesto, Dalit Panthers include all of the revolutionary parties which seek to destroy the Hindu *varna* system; and, all real leftist parties are its friends. Its declared enemies are the landlords, capitalists and money-lenders. It aims at an all-round revolution. The Panthers are gaining ground in many urban and rural areas, although they are still largely supported by the Mahars. It is significant to note that the Panther's ideology is akin to Fanon's view that colonialism cannot be separated from race. In the ideology of the Dalit Panthers, class struggle cannot be separated from anti-caste Hindu *varna* element. Secular ideology based on class struggle is also reflected in various peasant movements.

Thus, the ideologies of the Backward Classes movements reveal five organizing principles: 1. withdrawal and self-organization; 2. claiming a higher *varna* status; 3. extolling the virtues of the non-Aryan (Dravidian) culture; 4. negating Hinduism altogether and embracing Neo-Buddhism and 5. Marxian ideology combined with anti-caste Hindu theme. It may be noted here that except for the Dalit Panthers, the religious theme forms an essential part of protest ideology. The reason for this is that the religious component provides the chief mechanism to improve self-image and self-respect, and it also helps to establish an identity. The religious aspect is as important as the economic, educational and political ones. All of these aspects form a part of the same protest ideology. For instance, whether the Yadavas claim higher caste status, or equal employment opportunities, they are attacking the monopoly of the upper castes in the fields of religion and economics.

Protest ideology may also develop out of other sources of motivation (besides relative deprivation) so as to reinterpret, reform and change the existing situation which is considered unsatisfactory. For instance, Brahmo-Samaj, Prarthna-Samaj and Arya-Samaj arose out of a need to reinterpret and change the belief system to suit the current challenges. Such movements, however, do

involve confrontation and conflict with the orthodox sections, which may organize themselves to counteract change and maintain the *status quo*.

In the literature on social movements such attempts at fresh interpretation, reform and change in the existing situation are named as revitalization movements. Wallace¹⁰ proposed the term revitalization movement as a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture, and analyzed the dynamics of revitalization movement in four phases: a period of cultural stability, a period of increased individual stress, a period of cultural distortion and a period of revitalization. These movements are often religious in character but may be quasi-political militaristic, as has been seen in many tribal movements.

Revitalization movement as defined by Wallace is no doubt more comprehensive and positive than such terms as nativistic or revivalistic, messianic or millenarian. However, revitalization indicates adaptive processes in establishing equilibrium situations. In actual reality, movements form a part of a situation of continuous conflict and change. Although movements aim at revitalization of their culture or subculture, they are yet in opposition to and in conflict with other counteracting forces. Moreover, sections of society make use of some aspects of the reformed belief system to build up their protest ideology. For example, the Arya-Samaj gave the right of wearing the sacred thread to its adherents. The *avarna* sections made the sacred thread a symbol of protest against their status of relative deprivation and asserted their superior religious status by wearing it in public ceremonies which resulted in confrontation and conflict with some of the *savarna* castes. If we were to label Arya-Samaj as a revitalization movement it gives a vitiated picture of both the motivating forces behind the movement as well as the social and cultural consequences of change in the context of action and interaction between the participants of the movements and the counteracting movements. The ideology of a movement tends to be dynamic and complex, operating with diverse symbols, and picking up new ones during its lifetime.

In this brief paper the endeavour has been to show that ideology-consequence dimension forms the pivot of any movement. Dissent, protest and reform form a part of the ideology which as a symbolic system of beliefs provides the motivating force and gives the programme of action its legitimacy. They also manifest themselves in a concrete programme of action. Reform refers to a degree of structural change brought about by movements.

(The ideology of protest movements among the Backward Classes is a symbolic system characterized by relative deprivation in the religious, economic, political, civic and educational areas of social life. These movements pivot around conflict and opposition. Historically Buddhism, Jainism and Veera-saivism arose in protest against Brahminism and the superiority of the Brahmans. All of these have led to far-reaching social consequences affecting the supremacy of the Brahmans. The devotional movements that emerged in

medieval India protested against the salvation paths of knowledge and action which were the monopoly of certain sections among the Brahmins.

As seen the Backward Classes movements that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries followed diverse themes to raise their self-respect and to establish an identity to fight for their statuses of relative deprivation.

The ideology of Backward Classes movements is double-edged; expressing the feeling of dissatisfaction; dissent and protest with the existing situation (with an awareness of relative deprivation) and working out a positive programme of redressing the malady. These movements have led to social transformation affecting the traditional pattern of super-ordination—subordination relationships.

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Discussion

on Papers by M S A Rao and S C Misra

PRATAP CHANDRA/ The Buddha did say as pointed out by Rao that knowledge could be experienced outside the Vedic texts, which do not aim at giving knowledge of ultimate reality in any sense. The Upanishads do that. But the Pali texts do not seem to have even a remote connection with the Upanishads. While it is true that Buddhism places the Kshatriyas over the Brahmans, this can hardly be considered a revolt. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Buddha accepted the supremacy concept as such. In any case, there are many things attributed to the Buddha and Buddhism, without evidence. But one thing which is certain is that Buddhism was different from Vedic thought, and was neither its extension nor its repudiation. Of course, the Buddha was aware of *Vasistha* and *Agasthya*—this means that he knew about these people, and that is about all. To repeat, there is a great deal of misunderstanding because we are pointlessly seeking a unilinear model when we should be looking for a multi-linear situation in ancient India.

DEVAHUTI/ There was enough emphasis on social acceptance then, even by reformers and dissenters in order to make their movements a success, because they could not make a complete break with the past. While agreeing with Pratap, basically, since there were no heretics in India, nor such a concept, it is not true that Buddhism was not a protest movement against the Vedas. Moreover, the Buddha was not completely unaware of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

The earliest period of Indian history is without justification called the Brahminical period. This is probably because sometimes it is fashionable to denounce certain groups—such as the Brahmans in the last two decades. But this (Brahminical period) was a period when the Indian class-caste system was fluid and caste as we know it had not come into existence. As proof we may note the considerable contribution to Indian literature by non-Brahmans.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Why does Misra refer to reform as structural change? This does not seem right, though cumulatively reform may lead to structural change, but in intent and conception it is not so. At any rate, for him the two most important constituents of movements are ideology and its end-products. Here, he seems to ignore the social content of a movement, that is an examination of movements in terms of the group involved. Then, since definitions have been used as heuristic devices in the Indian context, would this indicate that protest has been used substantially but dissent has not featured equally prominently?

The concept of relative deprivation should be clearly stated, since it is being used so often by sociologists and others. One may refer to de Tocquville's analysis of the French Revolution, and the upward mobile groups, when in the 19th century rationalization was an important factor. Would upward mobility amount to the same as the relative deprivation of other groups?

N SANJEEVI/ When Rao says that the change from Sanskrit to vernacular languages brought into existence a great deal of devotional literature in the regions, in the case of Tamil Nadu this appears to me as more of a strategy rather than an alternative to Sanskrit. For example, during this period of devotional upsurge one finds that the biggest patronage given was to the Brahmans by the royal kings, and several inscriptions such as *brahma-devatas* receiving land indicate this. In no other period was such patronage to Sanskrit and Brahmans given. And, it is during this period, not in the Sangam, or modern period or in the medieval period, that caste superiority and inferiority are most prominent despite what the literature of Brahmans may say about caste equality. Thus, the devotional and regional literature movements may be seen as attempts to preserve their culture rather than as protest. Modern parallels of DK and DMK may be seen, such as in EVR's anti-priest movement. Therefore, to correct the perspective, the evidence of anti-Brahman and non-Brahman movements would be seen from the vividly written and portrayed folk-lore literature in Tamil Nadu, rather than the textual one.

K M GEORGE/ The semantic difficulties while using terms like protest, dissent, reform, revolution, etc., are obvious since these developed in Western societies, and hence cannot be correctly applied to all movements. Do we not have our own terms in our languages which refer to these ideas? Why has no one referred to these, even in brackets?

C PARVATHAMMA/ In Rao's paper the delineation of different types of protest movements is difficult to understand, since these cannot always be separated. For example, if we take the Dalit Panther movement these subtleties can not be traced.

Rao states that a whole range of social movements in the North have tried successfully to follow Kshatriya *varna*. But what he implies by this is that there

was competition with the Brahmans. However, most of the movements in India do not strive for this; rather they attempt to reach Kshatriya *varna* with the blessings of the Brahmans! Therefore, these groups mostly remain below the Brahmans rather than in competition with them; wherever they have tried to compete the movements have not been successful. Examples may be given of the *Pancha-Brahmans*, an artisan group of the South, who could not have made any impact without the Brahmans; likewise even Veerasaivism. Hence, there are many more examples of groups using the services of Brahmans who, in turn, have protected their own interests by legitimizing the status of these groups as Kshatriyas. At any rate Kshatriya as a group is a very nebulous one, for is it not true that whoever has most strength can become a Kshatriya!

LEELA DUBE/ Rao has very aptly said that the distinction between structural change and organizational change is naive, and has blocked our understanding of social change. But so far as his classification is concerned—reform, change, transformatory change (revolution), and transitional change—it is not satisfactory. Reform is a conscious effort in certain directions, but transformation can come about at an unconscious level. When, again, he says that this is not a process of imitation but a process of aggression, I do not see how imitation can exclude aggression. These are not mutually exclusive terms. For example, in the movement referred to by him, the symbol of the highest ritual status—the sacred thread—was borrowed from sanskritic Hinduism. Thus, imitation was carried out in an aggressive manner.

Y M PATHAN/ With reference to the Mahar movement of Maharashtra mentioned by Rao, why did only they accept Buddhism and not the other Scheduled Castes, since the Maangs, the Dhors and others had also received the same treatment from higher caste people? Then again, while the Mahanubhavas disregarded the caste system in the Yadava period, later on the followers of this religious sect took to the caste-system, including untouchability. Why did this happen, and why did they not take to the reform movement of the later period?

ARUN BALI/ Rao states, "Historically Buddhism, Jainism and Veerasaivism arose in protest against Brahmanism and the superiority of the Brahmans". There is, however, a difference between the protest of Jainism and Buddhism on the one hand, and that of Veerasaivism on the other. While Jainism and Buddhism were revolts against Hinduism (or brahmansims) by remaining outside the pale of Hinduism, Veerasaivism revolted against Hinduism by remaining within Hinduism itself. What is the mechanism or modes of defence evolved by the target-group to fight the protesters?

RESPONSE

M S A RAO/ Let me clear up doubts of certain participants about the distinction between reformatory and transformatory change, which they find ambiguous. Firstly, reformatory movements do bring about changes—structural

changes—as they question the value system underlying the existing social relationships, and attempt to change the situation in respect of some areas of life. For instance, Brahmo-Samaj brought about significant reforms in regard to traditional Hinduism, and the place of women. Transformatory changes, however, are more intense and widespread affecting the power relations in terms of changing the positions of superordination and subordination. The Backward Classes movements did bring about changes not only in the religious sphere but also in the economic, educational and political areas of social life. The devotional movement abrogated the idea of caste by birth and of purity by a possibility of pollution. This may be considered as a structural change at a low level.

Ravinder Kumar referred to de Tocquville's position regarding relative deprivation in terms of upwardly mobile groups. This is central to the theme of my paper. There are two main trends in the development of the concept of relative deprivation: the mobility, and the movement approaches. The movement approach gives fresh insights into the working of the minds of the people participating in the movement. Hence, my emphasis on ideology based on protest and structural change rather than imitation and mobility. This statement is pertinent to the remarks by Leela Dube about imitation and aggression which are not exclusive. If you look at the spirit of the *janevu* (sacred thread) movement among the Yadavas, it is clear that they used the symbol of sacred thread to assert their superior status, attacking the monopoly of the *savarnas* in the use of religious goods and services.

Sanjeevi commented that devotional movements did not replace Sanskrit by the regional language. But the point is that the use of the regional language instead of Sanskrit did lead to a rich growth of regional literature and not merely to preserving non-Sanskrit traditions. In any case, the ideology of protest movements is always double-edged.

Parvathamma referred to the fact that the distinction among the five variations of the protest ideology is ambiguous, but the concern here is with the organizational principles in the ideology. Hence, in abstracting principles and giving empirical instances, these form examples of the manifestation of one or the other theme as the pivoting principle.

Secondly, Parvathamma says that the source of legitimization is the Brahman, when low castes claim higher status. This might have been the case in individual instances. However, in the case of Backward Classes movements they did not depend upon the Brahmans for legitimization. They had their own sources of legitimacy, myths, origins and others. Thus, the Yadavas had their myths which they upheld against the denial by the Brahmans, to enhance their self-image.

Pathan asked why Mahars had started a movement, and not the Maangs and Chamhars, etc. By way of explanation, we know that it is not merely the structural position of relative deprivation which gives rise to a movement, but it is also a certain awareness and perception of their position in contrast to others that leads to a movement. Such an awareness arose among the Mahars

through the military men and school teachers among them. More than that, they had a powerful leader in Ambedkar.

Pratap Chandra raised a fundamental question about Buddhism not being a form of protest, because there was pluralism in ancient India, and as such it was not a monolithic system against which dissent was relevant. For me, first, Buddhism was a form of protest against Brahmanism, because when the Buddha elevated Kshatriyas over the Brahmins—he was protesting against the supremacy of the Brahmins. Second, the Buddha was against Vedic rituals. Third, the *Jataka* stories show that the Buddha was asking his Brahmin converts to give up the Vedas which, according to him, make statements like, 'Mud speaks', 'Water speaks', and to take to meditation to realize the Truth. Thus, he repudiated the validity of the Vedas, which is a form of protest as I see it.

Devahuti considers my usage of the term Brahminical Hinduism as historically incorrect. Although it might be historically not true, from the point of view of the dissenters Brahminism is treated as a category of opposition to be attacked. Ideology is not always compatible with historical authenticity, and social acceptance should be understood in understanding reform movements.

S C MISRA/ Definitions attempted by me are tentative, and do need to be further clarified. To repeat, dissent is ideological, protest is social; and dissent is individual and may be expressed in art, poetry, etc. But when it becomes a challenge to the establishment and it takes on the social form, it is protest. This is apart from the ideational process of dissent and protest referred to in philosophy, and so on. The acceptance of dissent does arise out of economic cleavages. Examples are given in my other paper on Nizari movement, to be dealt with later on. Deviants refer to the category of criminals who do accept normative values but can not adhere to them. Similarly, rebellion does not question the basic system, so they may also be deviants, possibly at certain times leading, though not necessarily so, to reform.

Pratap's concept of a multilinear model and the absence of unilinear development is difficult to understand. How could half a dozen mutually existing systems be unaware of each other and not interact and exist in some kind of amicability? This is difficult to conceive, for me. The point is that we are not taking theoretical societies but a particular movement such as the Buddhist one in a specific situation. I feel that this is a dialectical process where first a movement is a heresy and then it develops its own school of thought, and then becomes an orthodoxy.

K J Shah

Dissent, Protest and Reform : Some Conceptual Considerations

IN STUDYING CONCEPTUALLY, DISSENT, PROTEST AND REFORM, TWO FACTORS MAY govern the procedure one follows, namely, 1. a purely conceptual study of dissent, protest and reform on the basis of a background of a number of studies of movements and/or a study of the works on these concepts, and 2. by turning this decisive disadvantage of not knowing about either, into an advantage. A freedom from the presuppositions, most likely originating in a Western context, will be of a great advantage for understanding these concepts in an Indian context. However, it cannot be a merely formal and abstract study, since it is also necessary to study concepts in the context of some Indian protest movements. This procedure has been attempted here, i.e., to understand concepts in the context of the movement against untouchability as understood and conducted by Gandhi and by Ambedkar. Since both of them were very articulate, a study of their activities provides excellent material for the study of reform, dissent and protest, specially through a comparative study of their approaches. This study has some other lessons also, such as understanding Gandhi's leadership and the understanding of the nature of science. It is hoped that this paper will be able to present a useful approach towards a better understanding of these concepts, and perhaps be able to bring out some fundamental considerations in the understanding of social sciences. It must however be pointed out that it is extremely difficult to weave Gandhian thought into a pattern, not because it is vague or diffuse or inconsistent, but because it is extremely complex. Nevertheless, however inadequately one may be able to bring out such a pattern in Gandhian thought, it is apparent that it has a significance which is both moral and intellectual.

Justification for the Movement

A study of the movement against untouchability may be classified under two heads: 1. the justification for the movement and 2. the programme of action for the removal of untouchability.

Gandhi's justification:

For Gandhi, untouchability was 'the greatest blot in Hinduisim'. His reasons were: (a) Gandhi at the outset points out what *were not* his reasons. It was neither his bitter experiences in South Africa, nor the fact that he was once an agnostic, or even the study of Christian literature (this came much later) that made him think of untouchability being a blot on Hinduism; (b) in fact, the idea had dawned on him even when he was twelve, specially when untouchables used to come to Gandhi's house; (c) he derived support for his idea from the Ramayana story that Rama was carried in a boat by an untouchable; (d) but what was the value of all these, if viewed against the authority of the *Shastras*? Gandhi replied that he was ignorant of the *Shastras*, and in so far as he is not ignorant, he is not a literalist. For him, the essence, the secret or the spirit of Hinduism was more important, which he supported by referring to the Gita which says that the members of all the castes should be treated on an equal basis. He also applies the test of love, truth and non-violence and finds that untouchability is indefensible; (e) he puts forward a general consideration that 'religion, to be worthy of the name, must not be inconsistent with the fundamental truths of ethics and morality'; (f) 'that religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth and violence'; (g) again, even if we suppose that some one still insists on support from the texts, then his argument was that the *Shastras* should grow and change according to changing needs. 'New experiences will teach us new duties, but Truth shall ever remain the same'; and, (h) 'I shall be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes . . . I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus, saturated with the spirit of Hinduism . . . But . . . if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability, I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself'.

The reasons given above for the support of a movement against untouchability are essentially religious in character, since it was Gandhi's contention that his was a religious movement. However, he was not unaware of the fact that it had political, economic and social aspects also.

Not a political but a religious movement

(1) To this understanding of the situation, there were several objections. One of the objections was that his was an attempt to disguise a political motive and a political objective under a religious garb. This kind of charge came from several quarters—caste Hindus, Christians, and the untouchables (Dr. Ambedkar). Each one of these groups formulated the charges differently, and Gandhi also answered them differently. For example, Shri V V Srinivas Iyengar said that it 'was not a religious movement but a great political movement. It was necessary for the politics of Mr. Gandhi to present to the Government a united front and to placate the Harijans . . . The present Temple Entry Movement was but a political stunt of Mr. Gandhi and his followers to win over that new path to the Congress.'

Gandhi's answer was characteristic, brief, clear and comprehensive: (a) that, had he been guided by the political instead of the religious instinct, he would have excluded Temple Entry from his programme and confined himself to the economic and the educational spheres. Instead, he had staked his popularity because he believed that without Temple Entry untouchability could not be said to have been abolished by Hinduism; (b) that Shri Iyengar and his friends should join the Harijan Sevak Sangh which had as its members many non-Congress men, in order to frame its policy and carry on the work; and (c) While they did this he would gain religious merit by prosecuting the Temple Entry Movement and show that it will, at a stroke, uplift the Harijans and caste Hindus, purify both, and automatically promote the temporal welfare of the former.

(2) It was suggested that the Independence Pledge allocated the programme of the removal of untouchability to the Hindus only, because the Congress was anxious to maintain a Hindu majority and therefore denied to the Mussalmans their right of conversion. To this charge, Gandhi answered: (a) it is the caste Hindus who have to rid themselves of the sin of untouchability and not the others; (b) he could not prevent any one thinking of the movement as a political dodge to maintain a majority; but the fact was that thousands of Hindus who were doing Harijan work had no thought of majority; and (c) the Congress could not prevent anybody from doing conversion work. Whether they exercise the right in the right manner or wrong, is for them to consider.

(3) Referring to Gandhi's sharp distinction between caste and *varna*, Ambedkar said that the confusion arose because the Mahatma wanted to play a double role—that of the Mahatma and that of a politician. 'As a Mahatma he may be trying to spiritualise politics. Whether he has succeeded in it or not, politics has certainly commercialised him. A politician must know that society cannot bear the whole truth and that he must not speak the whole truth if speaking the whole truth is bad for his politics. The reason why the Mahatma is always supporting caste and *varna* is because he is afraid that if he opposed them he will lose his place in politics. Whatever may be the source of his confusion the Mahatma must be told that he is deceiving himself and also deceiving the people by preaching caste under the name of *varna*'.

Gandhi did not answer this charge, or at least it is not available in any of the references examined. However, one could work out an answer: (1) partially the answer is contained in Gandhi's answer to the charges already considered, (2) and sometimes it may be a matter of how one considers the relationship between politics and the other aspects of life, which we shall deal with later on, because Gandhi insisted that the movement against untouchability was religious, or purely religious in character.

Movement Religious despite economic aspects

Gandhi emphasized the religious character of the movement, as against economic aspects of the problem stating, for example: (1) 'If it was demonstrated

to me to my satisfaction that the political or economic regeneration of Harijans would be enough to retain the Harijans in the Hindu fold, I should still want to open the temples and remove every trace of inequality—because for me it is as it must be for you, a question of repentance and reparation for the wrong we have done to our fellowmen’, and (2) ‘If the leaders of different religions in India ceased to compete with one another for enticing Harijans into their fold, it would be well for the unfortunate country. I have the profound conviction that those who are engaged in the competition are not serving the cause of religion. By looking at it in terms of politics or economics, they reduce the religious values, whereas the proper thing would be to estimate politics and every other thing in terms of religion.’

Political and other aspects of the movement

Gandhi’s insistence on the religious character of the problem, and the movement, was not a denial of any political (and economic and social) consequences. ‘Removal of untouchability may produce, indeed it will produce, great political consequences, but it is not a political movement’. Hence, for understanding the theory of the movement it is necessary to take note of these consequences—political, economic and social as referred to by Gandhi.

The Political Aspect

Gandhi did not give as much weight to the consequences of the success of the movement, because he believed that: (1) ‘God will not let us have Swaraj so long as we treat a brother as an outcaste by reason of his birth’, and (2) ‘Our being treated as social lepers in practically the whole world is due to our having treated a fifth of our own race as such. Non-cooperation is a plea for a change of heart, not merely in the English but equally in ourselves. . . . I expect a change first in ourselves and then as a matter of course in the English’.

The Economic Aspect

(1) Replying to someone who wanted to say that economic uplift was the problem and not Temple Entry, Gandhi said that it was wrong to put economic uplift in opposition to Temple Entry. Temple Entry can only help such uplift. (2) Temple Entry Movement ‘will as a stroke uplift the Harijans and Caste Hindus, purify both and automatically promote the temporal welfare of the former.’

Untouchability not an excrescence but an essence of Hinduism

The most fundamental objection to Gandhi was that his understanding of Hinduism was wrong, and therefore his understanding of the nature of the problem of untouchability was wrong. This was the objection strongly put forward by Ambedkar. If Gandhi argued that the secret of Hinduism was love, truth, non-violence and so on, and untouchability was an excrescence of Hinduism, then against this Ambedkar argued that untouchability was essential to Hinduism and not its excrescence. For Ambedkar caste was not merely a division of

labour, it was also a division of labourers and also a gradation or hierarchy of labourers. This system was anti-social because, it prevented (a) the development of a common purpose; (b) the development of any care for the aborigines—the scheduled tribes; (c) the development of any care for the lower castes and it did not permit them to go up; and (d) it hindered the Shuddhi Movement, because the problem as to the caste to which a person who has undergone Shuddhi should belong, remains.

It is sometimes said that these defects are defects of caste, but not *Chaturvarna*—the division of society into only four *varnas* or castes. But it is not at all clear how the thousands of castes could be reduced to four, how these are to be maintained, and how to see that these do not become too powerful and pernicious. Thus, according to Ambedkar, the only solution was inter-marriage. But since the Hindus are deeply religious, different subcastes do not inter-marry because they consider it anti-religious. Hence, this solution would also not help. The effective remedy, therefore, was to tell the Hindus that something was radically wrong with their religion; and the remedy would be in giving up what was wrong in the religion; However, this remedy was also not likely to work because, (1) the Brahmans will not lead the movement against caste, and to ignore this is not to recognize the role of the intellectual classes in a community, and (2) the Hindus cannot take the help of reason, because the *Shastras* do not allow any role to reason and to morality. Finally, the only way was to destroy the religion of the *Shrutis* and the *Smritis*. Nevertheless, Ambedkar argued, he was not against religion as such, for what the Hindus call religion is really a law or at best a legalized class-ethics. The Hindus, if they are to survive, he said, must give up the idea that there is anything eternal or *Sanatana*; and they should judge the beliefs, etc., by their survival value. However, Ambedkar left this task to the Hindus, because he left the Hindufold soon after making this speech.

Gandhi's brief reply to Ambedkar was: (1) 'The scriptures properly so-called can only be concerned with eternal verities and must appeal to any conscience, i.e., any heart whose eyes of understanding are opened', (2) And even regarding the scriptures confined to the eternal verities, 'Who is the best interpreter! Not learned men, surely. Learning there must be. But religion does not live by it. It lives in the experiences of its saints and seers, in their lives and sayings... A religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced. For that and that alone can be used as the standard to aspire to, if not to improve upon'.

(3) 'Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom whose origin I do not know and do not need to know for the satisfaction of my spiritual hunger. But I do know that it is harmful both to spiritual and rational growth'. However, *varna* is quite different from caste. *Varna* only defines the duties of men belonging to different vocations. There is no question of superiority or inferiority. There should be no question of difference of payment; a scavenger is as worthy of his hire as a lawyer or as the president of a country. Given this kind

of *varna*, it frees us from competition and enables us to pursue the satisfaction of our spiritual needs.

Ambedkar was unconvinced and replied: 'My complaint is about the Hindu ideals and not that they do not follow their ideals. If the ideals are not wrong, why is it that there are so few good specimens and so many bad specimens of Hindus?'

To sum up, this controversy between Gandhi and Ambedkar shows that they both agreed in their disapproval of the practice of untouchability. They differed in their understanding of what they disapproved, and in their perception of the problem. While Gandhi considered untouchability an excrescence of Hinduism; Ambedkar thought that it was an integral part of Hinduism. How are we to understand this difference in their disapproval? How is this difference related to the rightness or wrongness of the understanding, the rightness or wrongness of the perception of the problem? Before discussing these questions, we have given an account of some associated differences, and the associated questions that they give rise to.

This difference in disapproval is associated with the difference in the way Gandhi and Ambedkar suggested steps or measures for the removal of untouchability. This also meant that there was a difference in their idea of what state of affairs was to replace the then existing one, i.e., the state of affairs in which untouchability prevailed. These differences also raise questions similar to those raised earlier. How are we to understand and describe the difference in the steps suggested and also the difference in the state of affairs aimed at? What is the bearing of these differences on the rightness or wrongness of one's understanding of the problem? But before we take up these questions, we must give an account of the differences in the steps suggested and the state of affairs aimed at.

The Programme for the Removal of Untouchability

I. The Gandhian Programme

Gandhian programme included Temple Entry, the use of wells, education, interdining and intermarriage and so on. The cases were discussed in detail, in terms of the goal to be achieved, the kind of organization to be set up, the kind of role to be played by the different parties—the caste-Hindus, the untouchables, and the Harijan Sevak—involved in the situation. While it may be very instructive to go into all the details of this programme, for the present it will suffice to discuss the question of Temple Entry and note some of the features:

(1) The most active role was to be played by the caste-Hindus, who had to repent for their sins. It is they who had to attain success: (a) by making every effort to see that temples are opened to the Harijans, (b) by taking untouchables along with them to temples, and (c) by refusing to go to temples which do not permit the Harijans to enter, etc.

(2) Harijans should not force themselves to take up the issue, unless they want to go to the temples. However, if steps are to be taken, they should offer only individual satyagraha and be ready to suffer the consequences. Otherwise, Harijans have to devote themselves to the improvement of their conditions.

(3) Gandhi was very clear that non-Hindus should not take any active role in getting the temple opened to Harijans. He objects to a Christian leading a Temple Entry agitation in Kerala, and to a Sikh kitchen providing food to the satyagrahis. It is the Hindus who have to atone for their sins, rather than others—directly or indirectly.

(4) Gandhi wanted the Harijan Sevaks to improve the lot of the Harijans in every way, so that their integration with the society was easy or at least not so difficult.

(5) It is characteristic of Gandhi that he always tried to find ways of reducing the harshness of the impact of change. For example, he suggested that the temples may be thrown open to Harijans only at certain times, and that temples may be built for Harijans that may be open to non-Harijans.

(6) He did not want to make the programme more difficult than was necessary. For example, he did not want to mix up the question of temple reform with the question of Temple Entry.

(7) Gandhi generally always recognized the distinction between what he personally accepted or even what he would regard as undesirable, and the programme that was to be put forward. For example, while he did not mind interdining, he would not put it forward as a programme.

Ambedkar's Programme

Ambedkar's programme included:

- (1) Hindus must give up their religion;
- (2) Harijans must have separate electorates; and
- (3) Harijans should get themselves converted.

Gandhi's reaction to this Programme

- (1) The question of separate electorates:

- (a) Harijans are not a minority in the sense in which the Parsis, the Muslims or the Christians are minorities.
- (b) Protection of the neglected classes should not be carried to an extent which will harm them, and the country.

- (2) The question of conversion.

Gandhi's discussion of the various issues with regard to conversion were many, but only the main features may be noted:

- (a) 'Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change religion as he changes his garments'.
- (b) Conversion will mean fratricide amongst the Harijans.

- (c) The caste-Hindus need not worry about the threats of conversion, but they owe it to themselves and their religion to give up untouchability.
- (d) The members of other communities should not try to fish in troubled waters. Such an attempt is anything but religion.

The Social Objective

Gandhi's Social Objective

It is not merely the brotherhood of Hindus, but that of man, be he a Parsi, a Muslim, a Christian or any one else, because in such a situation there will be no kind of exploitation, and cooperation will be the order of the day.

II Ambedkar's Social Objective

The elimination of the inferior position of the untouchables in the Hindu fold, so that in the search of this objective, there is no consideration of whether one set of tensions is replaced by another set of tensions.

Some Conceptual Considerations

In the foregoing pages, a broad account of the movement against untouchability as it was conducted by Gandhi and by Ambedkar has been given. The account may appear to be unnecessarily detailed, or even perhaps not as detailed as it should be. However, given the most important features of the movement, it will provide sufficient background for an adequate understanding of the concepts of dissent, protest and reform.

Dissent

While noting the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar, in their disapproval of untouchability, how shall we understand these differences? Having disapproved of it Gandhi proceeds to say that untouchability is an excrescence of Hinduism, and in order to remove untouchability it is not necessary to condemn the religion. Thus begins a 'reinterpretation' of the *Shastras*. On the other hand, Ambedkar says that since untouchability is intimately connected with the essence of Hinduism, it implies that if we want the removal of untouchability *per se*, the essence of Hinduism should go. Thus, for Ambedkar it is not a question of the reinterpretation of the *Shastras* but a rejection of the *Shastras*, i.e., Hinduism itself should go. Consequently, if Gandhi is a revisionist, a revivalist and a traditionalist, Ambedkar is a radical and a modern not only in his beliefs or ideas, but he is a radical, a modern in that he wants a clean break with the past. Gandhi does not want a clean break with the past; he wants continuity.

But is this all? And is this the most important thing we can say about the difference between the approach of Gandhi and Ambedkar? There are other differences which enable us to characterize dissent. For example, Ambedkar is pre-occupied—it is his main, even sole concern—with the interests of the untouchables, who after all are the sufferers, and not the caste-Hindus who in any case can take care of themselves. This is why he is so angry with the caste-Hindus

that he would not care if they are not trusted. And even in the case of the untouchables, he wants to take care only of their immediate liberation and not their religious interests or even long-term interests. As against this, Gandhi's approach is different. In the case of the untouchables, Gandhi is concerned about all their interests including their religious interests and the attitude they should have to religion. He is concerned not only about the untouchables, but also about the Hindus. In fact, he would ask: who are the real sufferers? They are the caste-Hindus. The untouchables are also sufferers—but for him 'it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong'. It might be said that all this is pious pretension. Gandhi was concerned about protecting his class and their interests from utter destruction. But it is not at all clear that the destruction of the caste-Hindus would have benefited the untouchables; it may have even harmed them.

How should we describe the foregoing difference? Gandhi's concern, unlike Ambedkar's, is with the individual and social good as a whole and not only with some aspects of an individual or only some sections of the community. One might say that Gandhi's approach is a comprehensive approach or a moral approach, whereas Ambedkar's approach is partial, it is selfish in relation to other groups and it is concerned with one's narrow material interests.

But is not this distinction between the two approaches a false one? Is not the fight for one's rights a moral fight? This raises the question of means and ends. But without going into this discussion it is assumed that the ends do not justify the means; and, therefore, a certain approach to the achievement of certain ends however moral, may render the fight not a moral one. If this proposition is right, the question that further needs to be asked again is this: Who is more radical, one who is partial, or one who is comprehensive and moral? Even if the former is radical in his method, it is the latter who is more radical in his understanding and objectives. It is true that if such a person has no method or no effective method, then once again he will cease to be radical. But if he has an effective method then it will be wrong to speak of him as a revisionist, reformist and traditionalist. And, then, he is not a reinterpreter of the *Shastras*, he is a recreator. Consequently, even though it is possible to describe the difference in terms of the dissent of Gandhi and Ambedkar, the description in terms of moral and partial appears to be both satisfactory and illuminating.

Protest

Without going into the morphology of protest—individual, group and mass, violent and non-violent satyagraha, silent-protest, strikes, dharna, gherao and so on—much as one would like to, the remarks here will be confined to the nature of protest arising from the foregoing discussion on dissent.

The nature of dissent influences the nature of protest. In the case of Ambedkar, protest took the form of: (a) advice to the Hindus to give up their religion, (b) a demand for separate electorates, and (c) a movement for conversion. In this approach there is scant regard for the interests of the Hindus; or at least

there is a misunderstanding of these interests. In the same way, there is a disregard for the religious interests of the untouchables. In the case of Gandhi, there is a consideration of the interests of the various sections of the community; also, all varieties of interests—religious, economic, political and so on are taken care of. Therefore, a programme cannot involve the use of means which will harm the real interests of the community or any of its sections. In the case of Ambedkar's programme there is no such restriction.

Though the adoption of a moral approach imposes a restriction on the means, it does not necessarily exclude violent means. And the adoption of non-violent means does not necessarily imply that the cause is a moral one. The morality of the cause depends on the kind of considerations that have been taken into account in understanding the problem.

Reform

How are we to describe the changes brought about by different kinds of protest? If there was sufficient information about the changes brought about in the lives of converts and their relationship to others, as in the case of converts to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc., this would be very useful. But in the absence of such information, a successful moral protest will not increase group conflicts, and, a successful partial protest is likely to increase such conflicts.

The nature and relationship between dissent, protest and reform

In the foregoing account, the term dissent has been used to refer to beliefs challenging either the existing beliefs or institutions. The term protest has been used to refer to the programme of action, and action to alter the beliefs or the institutions. The term reform has been used to mean the change in the state of affairs brought about from the earlier state of affairs existing in the society. But these are not the words used by Gandhi: He does not very much use words like reinterpretation in place of dissent. Instead, he thinks of purification; protest is purification, penance, search for truth, and reform is some sort of realization of truth.

What is the relationship between dissent, protest and reform? They are understandable in terms of one another. However, it is possible that under certain circumstances there may arise because the dissenters are weak, a case of dissent that may be called pseudo-dissent. Again, the protest may not succeed for many reasons. Under these circumstances protest may cease to be a movement, it becomes terrorism. Terrorism is not merely applicable to violent struggles. All partial protests are *ad hoc*, and to that extent terroristic. It may happen also that reform may not be reform; it may be superficial such as most of the reforms in our educational system that have been advocated during the last two decades or so.

Who or what is right?

It might be said that here there can be no question of who is right. There is here a difference of outlook, temperament and of approach. But underlying

these differences, is there not a different understanding of phenomena involved? In the moral approach, it is believed that for properly tackling the issue, phenomena have to be seen as interconnected. It may be said that the other side also accepts, that the phenomena are interconnected. But it ignores the implications of the interconnections in the interest of some immediate problems. But such a view can create trouble, for there are always tensions elsewhere both in individual or in social life. Or, one may deal with the symptoms, and all the efforts will go waste. Even if it is suggested that a partial attack is traditionally necessary, one can group it only if the whole problem—totality—is at the back of one's mind. If it is not, frustration is bound to occur.

If what has been stated is right and agreeable, then it is not proper to say that the choice between the approach is a matter of only temperament, etc. On the contrary, one of the choices has to be both morally and intellectually more adequate, than the other. In this context, we believe it is not proper to separate intellectuality and morality. This being the case, Gandhi was not merely a moral leader, he was an intellectual leader also. Consequently, it is gross injustice to consider him more of a charismatic leader, in the sense in which the term is understood. It would also be incorrect to call Gandhi a traditionalist, and so on, as the communists and others do. At any rate, all these propositions have certain serious implications for the theory and practice of science. This requires further work.

Discussion

on Paper by K J Shah

DEVAHUTI/ Reformers have to draw a line somewhere and keep a single purpose in view, in order to remove such evils as slavery, untouchability, colonialism and so on. They succeed because unlike philosophers, they did not take everything together! Gandhiji's success lies in this.

Y B DAMLE/ Shah should take into account Vithal Rao Shinde's formulation before discussing Ambedkar and Gandhi.

C PARVATHAMMA/ Shah's rationalization arguing that Gandhi was more concerned with untouchability because he took into account all aspects of life, is extremely simple. Ambedkar, in contrast, whose interest was confined to a section of the population discussed only the economic and political aspect. Moreover, I feel that the reason Gandhi was listened to was because he was an upper caste-Hindu. On the other hand, such an approach of Gandhi would not have been possible for Ambedkar who was not a caste-Hindu. In any case, clearcut issues concerned more with internal truths were brought into prominence by Ambedkar rather than Gandhi who mixed up several issues within the framework of religion. Unfortunately, this is the reason why Gandhi's upper caste (Hindu) notions have been incorporated in the Constitution rather than Ambedkar's radical programme.

N SANJEEVI/ The analysis of Gandhi and Ambedkar is a very delicate issue, because we are still in the midst of assessing them, and emotions are bound to be aroused in assessing their leaderships. If the fundamental issue is, who between Ambedkar and Gandhi is more qualified and which of them adopted the better qualified way, in my view it is Ambedkar, for he was one of the community he was fighting for. The question is, how far was Ambedkar justified in abandoning Hinduism and seeking shelter in Buddhism? Finally, should not radicals like Ambedkar, who were not so religiously involved, have realized that to cut the roots of the caste problem it should be viewed as just a manifestation of some economic order, i.e., to realize that unless the root of this

economic order is cut, at no point of time will we be able to solve either the problem of untouchables or the problem of castism?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ First, could one not look at Gandhi and Ambedkar as addressing very different constituencies? This is in the sense that Gandhi is concerned with changing attitudes in caste-Hindu society, and Ambedkar is concerned in creating an aggressive sense of dignity in his untouchable constituencies. Therefore, in fact, the views about these problems may be seen as if the two were engaged in a dialogue, rather than seeing the views as comparisons of their political or intellectual styles. This is not valid.

Second, Shah in his presentation seems to imply that the phrase 'political calculation' is something immoral. But does not 'political calculation' have to be kept in mind to be politically effective? For a man who is leading a country of four hundred million, who is seeking to stimulate their morals and their creativity through their political aggregation, whether political calculation is moral question or not, is immaterial. There is no conflict in morality and politics at all levels.

Finally, when we consider terms of protest, dissent and reform at one level we are concerned with how daringly people think, while at another level we are concerned with how effectively they act. Now, if one for a moment left the daring side of Gandhi in relation to the recreation of the *Shastras* as Shah put it, I think he will himself come to know or believe people to be a little saner; as they talk of Gandhi and even look at Hindu tradition. In this context, how effectively do you think he acted in eradicating the untouchable forms?

C PARVATHAMMA/ Gandhi's approach was that of a national leader, concerned with changing Indian society as a whole. He was not particularly concerned about one section of the community—the untouchables. Ambedkar on the other hand was the leader of the particular section he belonged to. His approach was to preserve the identity of that particular section. That would account for the difference in their ideological approaches.

S C DUBE/ What Shah is trying to emphasize is, while Gandhi had a great concern for the reordering of society, he did not want to throw away the strata since ours is a kind of society which is characterized by non-antagonist strata. A similar concern was not articulated by Ambedkar. Thus, the first of Shah's argument was that in choosing concepts to be used as tools we very often tend to define them narrowly. But if we have a clear empirical reference and try to invest a deeper meaning into the concept, one has to go into certain nuances which are of very great significance. What Shah is trying to do is to take us beyond simple definitions. He is trying to pose before us a series of problems, which have diversity of forms and meanings.

M S A RAO/ British Imperialism as a factor of equation between Gandhi and Ambedkar needs to be taken into account.

R E S P O N S E

K. J. SHAH/ The questions raised about the right and wrong of Gandhi and Ambedkar, is not what I have in mind. This only confuses the issue since the criterion of judgement has to be both intellectual and moral. The question really is, will it be better to consider the problem of different sections of the community separately, or to consider these as different aspects of life as a whole? Which is a better way of tackling the issues? While specific problems may be attacked in specific ways, as radically as possible, we have to bear in mind such other aspects as well, provided one does not make the mistake of leading society from one state of tension to another state of tension. However, if this is not always avoidable, it is certainly possible to be careful about the outcome. Movements often fail because they are not comprehensive enough; because they do not take into account that there is the other point of view and there are other aspects of life which should be taken into account. I think that many of our so-called mini revolutions, or tentative mini revolutions have failed because we have not taken into account the larger perspective.

In a sense, I suggest that we are all in a system, i.e., we are all involved in a 'conspiracy' so that if you suddenly try to change or take over just one point in it, you fail. For example, in Hindu society, since everyone is in 'conspiracy' in the matter of corruption, or inefficiency or what have you, if one tries to eliminate corruption in any one area one fails because every section of the society is corrupt. This is despite the fact that in every section there are a few individuals who are trying to be honest. But nobody wants to initiate change, or become uncorrupt first, because in this there is bound to be a failure to change that may cause great disappointment. Now, those persons who want to take a moral leadership against these things or situations have to have the courage, before asking their followers to become honest, to become honest themselves. Thus, what I want to suggest is that if the whole, or the entire aspect is not taken into account, there is always a possibility that what one tries to do will prove a failure. But a comprehensive approach does not mean that you always have to attack the problem at once; one may attack one problem at a time, but we do have to take into account all the other aspects.

What I have said has certain consequences about the understanding of social reality. Social scientists in trying to understand social reality, in spite of all the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary talk, remain exclusive to a particular area. Therefore, so far as their thinking remains exclusive it will not give them an understanding of the situation, good enough for making alterations in that society. I do not know how this has to be worked out in actual practice. But I do think that if phenomena are to be interconnected, there is a need for paying greater attention to this point. Of course, in spite of everything that I have said about taking this comprehensive view, if one does not have an effective method, it is possible that one will become a 'revisionist'. Here, in many ways Gandhi did revolt and use effective methods to tackle the issues. We might

not be very happy with the amount of success he achieved. But, I believe, that, here, one thing is forgotten; that he was the only man who tackled the society as a whole successfully. I do not see that the CPI or CPI(M) or the other kind of leadership which has been trying to tackle the issues is really able to take the country together.

Now, all this is generally explained in terms of Gandhi having been a charismatic leader. But why do we not for a moment think that he had a better apprehension of Indian social reality, in terms of rejecting the kind of things that should be rejected? Gandhi had a greater apprehension of Indian social reality which is so fragmented that if you try to take care of one section the remaining sections being too many, add up to a greater force whereby you are rendered helpless against these problems. Gandhi having taken note of this, was at least able to do something.

Now, the question was raised—what about this privilege of performing penance, this privilege of deciding whether one would be a trustee or one would not be a trustee. But this was not a question of choice, except in a limited way, because whenever Gandhi found that he did not succeed he persevered, and put pressure. But were Gandhi's methods non-violent in this context, was a very valid question. No violence, in a physical sense, was used. The pressure that he could exert was considerable, it was a moral one. And so far as Ambedkar is concerned he was a great man who was trying to lead a section of the community, from within community. While he had a special position, a special privilege, a special possibility, could one not say, that these possibilities were to a certain extent reduced by the fact that he changed over? On the other hand, Gandhi was not ashamed of being a Hindu, though he may not have been a good 'Hindu'. But he did at least think in terms of Hindu—or the poor, or of India—whatever context was required. Therefore, there was bound to be a difference of approach between Gandhi and Ambedkar. It is as if Ambedkar had told the Hindus, 'You give up your religion'. If so, how could Ambedkar have told the Hindus to purify themselves although to ask them to purify themselves would have been a little simpler than to ask them to give up their religion, because this is a much more radical demand.

As far as 'political calculations' is concerned I agree with Ravinder Kumar, who has given the answer himself, i.e., there need not be a conflict between political calculations and moral calculations. The question will, however, have to be asked whether because of political calculations the moral principles were allowed to go by default. If Gandhi did this, we do not know. But so far as one knows the person's general life (and we know about it) he tried at all levels whether always successfully or not, to keep the moral principles as primary against the political ones. Finally, what I have said has been a concern all the time with the nature of dissent, nature of protest and reform etc. which needs to be related to the social sciences the social reality, i.e., the way in which social reality has to be approached. I took these examples of Gandhi and Ambedkar because I found them a good starting point.

Pratap Chandra

Study of Ideological Discord in Ancient India : Search for a Suitable Model

AS THE TITLE INDICATES, THIS PAPER DOES NOT PROPOSE TO DEAL WITH NARRATIVE history as such but only with certain methodological issues involved in the study of ancient Indian history. A close acquaintance with this subject leads one to wonder how many historians, past as well as present, have taken the trouble of looking at their methodological tools, and at historical models which play an important role in historical research. This neglect has resulted in the adoption of a particular model for the study of ancient Indian history, especially its ideological aspects, which is not only unsuitable but has needlessly confused the issues; and led to our losing sight of the peculiarly Indian approach to matters intellectual. The value of debates concerning the particularities of individual movements of dissent, protest and/or reform in Indian civilization cannot be minimized but, in the absence of a clear understanding of the nature and character of the social milieu responsible for shaping these movements, such debates can serve only a limited purpose. This understanding requires, *inter alia*, a model which can do full justice to the situation. Generalizations are undoubtedly an important part of history-writing, both as aids and as end-results helping conceptualization. However, the universal must not be stressed at the expense of the particular, and the particular must not be divorced from that which serves as its underlying substratum, investing it with meaning and value. Both have to be kept in view constantly and simultaneously if a worthwhile understanding of a situation is our aim. This, unfortunately, is what one finds missing, and historians writing about ancient India have taken recourse to one extreme or the other. While one group restricts itself to the different episodes or schools, the other has its sights fixed only at generalizations about the Hindu character, the Indian mind, oriental mysticism, and so on. It is frequently overlooked that if the particular becomes fully explicable only in terms of the general, the latter too has to be 'home-grown', not imported, obtaining its content from the particular. However, if the general is bodily lifted from

some other context and the particular is somehow forced into it, the result is not likely to be very illuminating. This is precisely what seems to have happened in the case of ancient Indian history.

Few factors have clouded our understanding of ancient India more than the fatuous, though very popular slogan, 'unity in diversity'. In building up a national self-image, or as a symbol in the struggle against an enemy taking advantage of India's disunity, this slogan had some relevance. But serious history is a different matter. Even a so-called 'present-minded' historian¹ cannot fail to notice that make-belief serves only a limited and transitory purpose. This consideration has not prevented this charming myth from gaining wide currency, blinding historians from seeing its implications. Such a unity, if at all it existed, is only a formal one, and is meaningless unless the diversities are given equal importance. But, then, why use the term unity at all? An over-emphasis on form promotes neglect of content, and generalizations based on mere form hardly add to historical understanding. If anything, such generalizations are likely to act as positive hindrances. Ignoring basic divergences of the content, with a view to establishing some kind of formal unity, may be good policy but it is certainly bad history.

The ardent desire to wish away all heterogeneity from ancient India has coloured the judgement of a number of historians particularly the pioneers who worked in the field of the history of ideas. A prior knowledge of, and perhaps attachment to European thought easily persuaded these historians to view India's ideological development as a single-line growth. An intellectual monolith came to be conjured up to which all kinds of attributes were ascribed depending on the writer's own inclination. It is little known that the all too popular image of 'spiritualist India' was a consequence of the absolutistic-spiritualistic leanings of the first creators of this monolith. Some German Indologists—Max Mueller, Paul Deussen, Weber etc.—first promoted this image. They were imbued with a crusading zeal to uphold and propagate absolutism of the Hegelian brand, and viewed everything through Semitic spectacles. Two other historical factors combined to make the view so acceptable: the British were looking for a moral justification for their imperialist policies, and the subjugated Indians needed emotional palliatives. For one, India's alleged other-worldly spirituality provided a reason for continued foreign domination; for the other, it amounted to a valued certificate of India's past glory. The unilinear model of growth was unquestioningly adopted because it simply happened to be the pattern of growth in Christian Europe. Terms current in the latter tradition—orthodox and heterodox, established viewpoint and heresy, mainstream and deviances—were borrowed wholesale to describe the ancient Indian situation, as an obvious oriental variant of the European. The apparent simplicity and familiarity offered too great a temptation, and were taken over. For, the alternative would have been to face all kinds of complexities, and a good deal of extra labour.

Disenchantment with the spiritualist stereotype is not a product of any realization of the methodological inadequacy of the prevalent approach. In truth, the reasons for the rejection are qualitatively no different from those which prompted its acceptance in the first place. Perhaps not many objections would have been raised against it had it not become a liability in the light of the well-known Weberian analysis. If one wished to investigate the causes for India's failure to modernize herself, her alleged other-worldliness, if admitted, could provide a ready and logical answer. Those interested in removing hurdles to modernization had only two ways open to them, to accept the reality of the spiritualist monolith and start an educational programme to bring about basic changes in the Hindu's *weltanschauung*, or question the reality of the monolith and emphasize the 'deviances' from the 'main current', i.e., dissent and protest. There was a third alternative. This was to stop hoping for, or attaching importance to, modernization in view of what is termed as 'Hindu spirituality'. However, not many have opted for this.

A number of influential sociologists, Indians as well as foreigners, have pleaded for the first alternative, but we are not concerned with them here. There are two other types who have chiefly devoted themselves to the task of picking holes in the monolith: the pro-modernity sociologists and the historical materialists. But an authentic historical understanding of ancient India has not been the aim of either. If 'unity in diversity' gave way to 'diversity in unity' it was for entirely practical reasons. Nonetheless, this led to a better picture of ancient India, which was a gain. But has it brought us closer to a real understanding of ancient India? Does it restore to Indian thought and culture their unique character? The answer can only be in the negative. This new picture suffers from the same prejudices that vitiated the earlier one, and lacks equally in inquisitiveness about the basic framework of Indian thought, about the true character of the outline into which the details from a new angle have to be filled.

The controversy about the true character of Indian thought which was going on between the traditionalists and the modernists would have been obviated—may not have arisen at all—if historians had paid adequate attention to one of the first requirements of historical research, i.e., a self-conscious and critical examination of the historical model on which the study has been, or is to be, based. It is a truism of the methodology of social sciences that working without such a model is humanly impossible. The fact that in most cases it is held unconsciously, implicitly or without proper articulation and criticism does not signify its absence. It only makes it all the more imperative to pay attention to it. An unconsciously held model can, and in fact does, easily lead both the historian and his audience in a predetermined direction which may or may not be intended. If the historian is fully conscious of his assumption, he can avoid pitfalls. Models are after all analogies which are fruitful only where the resemblances are truly significant and plentiful. The moment it is felt that differences are too fundamental, the model can be discarded. On the other hand,

unconsciously held models frequently assume the form of prejudices. It would be naive to hope that even a reasonable amount of objectivity can be maintained by the prejudiced, uncritical, unreflective minds.

The traditionalists and the modernists have, consciously or unconsciously, rigidly adhered to the assumption that the model underlying the history of European thought can work equally well for ancient India. It is their firm belief that all that is required to be done is somehow to fill the details provided by Indian sources into a ready made outer frame provided by Europe. In other words, historical generalizations based on European history hold good for all places and all times. This is the crux of the matter. As long as we suffer from this fixation, of confusing universalization with Europeanization and Semitization, we will not realize that there is more to the study of any civilization than merely the discovering of parallels in it for the patterns emerging from European history. For a genuine understanding of the ancient Indian situation, we must realize that it was radically different from the European one historically, geographically and ethnically. Therefore, the model relevant to one will certainly be misleading for the other. Ideological discord can not but assume two qualitatively different forms in the two traditions; terminology originating in one can be applied to the other only with extreme caution and after noting necessary qualifications.

I

The ideological tradition of Europe has commonly been compartmentalized into three distinct periods. This has not been done merely for the sake of convenience, for the differences between them are basic. There are two elements which go into the formation and development of an ideology: the underlying, often inarticulate, assumptions, and the intellectual climate of the day. Though it is not possible to say why certain beliefs about the universe and man come to become axiomatic in certain societies, yet there can be no doubt that these beliefs exert a decisive influence on the ideology of that society, and no new ideology can be evolved or adopted without first consciously or unconsciously altering these beliefs. It is no exaggeration to say that the uniqueness of a society partly consists in the body of beliefs that uniquely belong to it. These beliefs underlie not only the articulate religio-philosophical doctrines but even the day-to-day thinking of the members of that society, and go a long way in shaping the values and reaction-patterns.

The other element—the degree of intellectual freedom—is no less important. The relevance of the intellectual climate becomes apparent the moment we realize that the birth and dispersal of an ideology requires not only a thinker or a group of thinkers who have something worth saying as well as the will and capacity to say it, but also the freedom to say it and a receptive audience. These two elements may furnish a meaningful basis for comparing the different periods of European thought, as also European and Indian thought.

In brief, of the three periods of European thought, the ancient differed from the medieval, in both these respects; while the third—the modern—inherited its basic beliefs from the second but the intellectual climate from the first. There are known historical reasons for this zig-zag pattern. One is the advent of Christianity, the other the Renaissance. The Hellenic way of thinking was diametrically opposite to that of the Semitic. The protagonists of the first were personal dualists, treating the body-soul union as wholly fortuitous and uncaused. Those of the latter were personal monists, treating body and soul as integral parts of the same unit, destined to stay together forever. An all-powerful, anthropomorphic, personal Creator of the world is conspicuous only by its absence in ancient Greece while in ancient Israel it provided the main focal point. Finally, the Greeks viewed time as a never-ending circle and consequently, the universe as eternal and uncaused, and also without any historical purpose. The Semitics view time as a straight line, and the universe as a creation in time which has its end also in time. It provides them with something to look forward to, and explains their genuine interest in the world, and their optimism. Greek thought ended in realization of the utter hopelessness of everything.

Thus, norms of intellectual life are always closely related to certain basic assumptions. Man was on his own in the Greek religion, without either being a creation of a personal God or doing His bidding. In such circumstances, total intellectual freedom and the absence of all claims of a monopoly of truth, appear to be both logical and natural. This is why Greek society was absolutely unaware of intellectual constraints of any kind. The priest was merely a liturgist, with no control over social mores. A Heraclitus could demand the burning of the works of Homer and Hesiod, and an Aristotle could make fun of the views of his own teacher! Modern European historians of Greek thought never employ terms like orthodox and heterodox, the established view and heresy. These terms in fact had their origin and currency only in the Middle Ages, when an altogether different intellectual climate came to prevail. God-centred religions always claim an exclusive possession of truth. Anything going against it or even different from it immediately becomes a heresy. Consequently, a total surrender to God's will, as manifested through the Christian dogma and church, constituted the very foundation of medieval European society. When another dogma arose in the same land laying identical claims and generally manifesting the same approach, religious wars became inevitable.

The specificities of the Greek situation oblige the historian to view it as a multiple-centred or multilinear model. Unilinear models are applicable only to those civilizations which were based on an intolerant, exclusivist ideology with near-universal dominance. The European Middle Ages indeed provide an instance of just this, necessitating the breaking out of a vast movement of dissent and protest in the form of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It hardly needs any argument to say that this latter model will be totally irrelevant and even misleading for the study of Greek society. Nor should it surprise

us that we do not come across any dissent, protest or reform movement in Greek history. (Some scattered bands of moralists do not constitute a 'movement'.) One dissents *from*, protests *against* and reforms *an existing* dogma, social or religious organization or set-up or a body of beliefs and practices. Unless we know what that *from* was which one dissented with or protested *against* these terms become meaningless. Moreover, by going all out to oppose something one implicitly acknowledges its predominance. There must be a single centre against which such exercises can be carried out. Where we have only a number of more or less equally powerful or popular viewpoints, two thinkers or schools can only differ from each other. This type of difference can hardly be dubbed as dissent or protest. In fact, while in the latter case the stress is on opposition, in the former it is on positive content, which is possible even without any knowledge of the other viewpoints. A dissent or a protest is necessarily very deliberate and self-conscious.

There are three logical conditions governing the use of terms like dissent and protest—some kind of physical and temporal proximity, an indubitably sequential order, and a sort of causal relationship. There can be no dissent or protest unless some element of the established dogma, which must be both near and prior to it, causes it. Further, the intensity as well as extent of opposition would always be in direct proportion to the strength, rigidity and pervasiveness of the dogma opposed. Finally, it is important to note that the dissenters, protesters and reformers rarely repudiate or even question structural continuities. Reshaping or remoulding of the existing beliefs and/or practices remain their sole objective. A deliberate and conscious rejection of the bases of prevailing beliefs and practices characterizes a revolution. While such a rejection, of course, cannot be separated from a feeling of dissatisfaction which lies at the root of dissent and protest also, the latter are forms of reform and not of revolution.

II

Those acquainted with the underlying assumptions of Indian thought and the intellectual freedom obtaining in ancient India will immediately perceive that if any period of European thought can be meaningfully compared with the Indian it is the Greek period and not the medieval. Yet, the precise opposite of this has mostly been accepted perhaps because the judgement of the pioneers was accepted too uncritically, without enough attention being paid to the underlying assumptions. In any case, due to factors about which one can only speculate, Greek thought is based on the same beliefs as the Indian; both have equally abhorred intellectual regimentation. An omnipotent personal Creator was unknown not only in ancient India and ancient Greece but also in the Sumerian and the Egyptian civilizations.² This amply proves that there is no element of psychological necessity or universality in this belief. Again ancient Indians felt compelled to draw all logical conclusions

from the dualist approach to human personality, including those not drawn by the Greeks. This in fact served as the point of departure. The circular view of time also characterizes ancient India.

All this, however, does not mean that there were not significant differences between Greek and Indian thought. There were, but they were formal, concerning the goals of philosophizing rather than its content. The Greeks chose not to draw all the conclusions from their basic assumptions, and remained ever wedded to the one goal of satisfying intellectual curiosity. They pursue knowledge for its own sake, and never gave up their attachment for pure theory. Indian thought, on the other hand, acquired a practical bias at a very early date. For reasons which are impossible to fathom, Indian thinkers became wholly engrossed in the issue of deliverance from the bonds of worldly existence. As a result, most thinkers at least formally, owed allegiance to this goal. Practical orientation, it may be noted here, is in fact the only point of similarity between medieval European and Indian thought. Yet, historians have failed to notice the fundamental differences and treated the two analogously on this flimsy ground alone. But in ancient India a thinker was not obliged to mould the content of his thought according to the accepted formal goals. A formal adherence was all that was needed, and in some cases even that was not maintained. Because they were viewing Indian thought through Semitic spectacles, and because Semitic intellectual norms forbade a cleavage between content and form, it appeared self-evident to them that all schools of Indian philosophy were uniformly salvation-oriented. This provides a good example of how unconsciously or uncritically adopted models can colour historical judgments.

Some of the reasons why early European Indologists based their study of Indian thought on the medieval European model and assumed a spiritualistic mainstream are as follows:

(1) With the resurgence of Greek intellectual values and theoretical orientation, brought about by the Renaissance, applied or practical philosophy began to mean only medieval religious philosophy. (Karl Marx changed this situation.) The apparent importance of salvation found in Indian philosophical literature, particularly that aspect of it which first attracted European attention, led the early Indologists to think that Indian thought was essentially religious and generically not very different from medieval Europe. The perfunctory nature of the available material reinforced this feeling.

(2) Modern Europe made its first acquaintance with Indian thought through the Latin translation of some Upanishads published in 1802 by the French scholar Duperron who made use of the Persian version and not the Sanskrit originals. Philosopher Schopenhauer found the solace of his life in these translations, though now they appear largely incomprehensible! The unspoken adherence to the medieval European model required an established viewpoint, an ideological mainstream. The great antiquity of the Upanishads and their

alleged Aryan connection easily elevated them to this status. Absolute idealism was becoming the dominant German philosophy, and the presence of a similar message in the Upanishads considerably enhanced their prestige.

(3) A section of Western intelligentsia, represented by thinkers like Thoreau and Emerson, felt irresistibly drawn to what they considered the lure of oriental spiritualism and mysticism. The vast importance attached to the spiritual elements in Indian thought was partly due to this.

III

A word about the historical factors responsible for investing ancient India with its peculiar nature.

The known relationship between social reality and social consciousness requires us to pay attention to the objective situation amidst which ancient Indian intellectual mores took shape. No two historical situations can be precisely identical. This necessitates an in-depth study of each such situation. The one remarkable feature of the ancient Indian situation—remarkable enough to account for its other peculiarities—was that it came into being as a result of a continuing process of racial and tribal assimilation, apparently spread over centuries. Ethnic diversity coupled with India's peculiar geography seems to explain a good deal, though owing to lack of empathy and the incredible fixation with an imported singularistic model we have failed to draw the warranted conclusions.

The modern estimation of the place and contribution of the Aryans to the building up of Indian civilization is not supported by historical evidence. Nevertheless, it has been allowed to influence our judgment in the matter. A large number of people seem to harbour the prejudice that the Aryans founded Indian civilization, that the Indians of the pre-Aryan era were barbarians, even though they did manage to produce an urban civilization; that pre-Aryan India was racially homogeneous, and that the victorious Aryan tribes were overly worried about racial purity.

None of this is substantiated either by archaeology or even by the literary works of the earliest Aryans themselves. It can be safely assumed on the basis of archaeological finds from different parts of the country that Indian civilization really dates back to several millennia before even the Harappan. Excavations as well as rock-shelter paintings clearly suggest that there were small settlements spread over the entire landmass that is India and Pakistan today, each trying to surmount the kind of natural hazards which only a tropical country can pose. Their very existence must have been constantly threatened by the thick jungles and the fauna sharing them with human beings. Civilization is the end-product of the efforts to adjust with such surroundings. For a variety of reasons tribes must have been forced to shift from place to place—paucity of food-stuffs (food is not grown but only gathered at this stage), in-

hospitable surroundings, geographical changes, etc. In this way they must have come into contact with each other.

Now, only two things could happen in such circumstances—a long tribal battle resulting in the complete subjugation of one tribe by another, or the realization by both the parties after a while of the utter futility of fighting. For want of definite evidence, one can only argue from effects to causes. We know that peculiar beliefs and customs provide a tribe with its self-identity. When we notice that all kinds of not only different but more or less incompatible beliefs are found side by side in the same section of society, the conclusion is irresistible—no tribe really managed to annihilate the identity of the other tribe. If any one tribe had succeeded in doing so, only one type of beliefs, practices, customs, etc. would have prevailed. Students of Indian literature are aware that such homogeneity is not found even in the earliest stratum of the Vedic texts! If a number of people worshipped gods like Indra, there were others who either questioned their existence or made fun of them. The texts have faithfully recorded both. There must have been occasional tribal flare-ups, as indeed the texts too indicate. However, these could hardly have been wars of attrition which, under such adverse natural conditions, could result only in mutual self-destruction. Even if some tribes did get destroyed, others learnt a lesson and this lesson never seems to have been forgotten. The cave-paintings, it may be noted, time and again feature group huntings but rarely human fights. It would hardly be facile to think that the circumstances were such that different tribes had no real option but to live with each other and borrow ideas from each other, to deal effectively with hostile surroundings. The peculiar capacity of the Hindu mind to absorb all kinds of contradictions, noted by so many, can be explained only on the basis of such historical factors.

A section of Indian intelligentsia still believes that the Aryans simply drove the original settlers, the Dravidians, towards the south and usurped their land. The vanquished could at best be accommodated as slaves. There is no doubt that the Aryans did defeat the *black and noseless* people. However, if it is granted that they had come from Central Asia, it will have to be explained how they managed to adjust in a land so different from the one about which they possessed some knowledge in the form of nature-lore. Where could they go for guidance except to those defeated by them? Their survival obviously depended on their ability to learn from others, and the history of ancient world testifies to the fact that they were both able and willing. No one can learn from those whom one detests or treats as mere slaves. The Aryans, in this way, their early vigour notwithstanding, had no alternative but to become one among many. There is really no evidence to show that they succeeded in imposing their own thought-patterns on the autochthons. If anything, there are unambiguous indications that they learnt a lot more than they taught, and some of their intellectual leaders—Vasishtha and Agastya, to name only two—could very well have been non-Aryans. It is clear from all accounts that the Aryans could not care less about racially pure blood. Imputing such motives

to them is nothing but imposing present-day racialist values on them without any warrant or justification.

All this goes to show that the unilinear model became wholly irrelevant in India at a very early date—centuries before the coming of the Aryans. Indian culture and civilization can be understood only on the basis of a multi-linear model. Logic of plurality dictated the growth pattern, and evidence to this can easily be gathered from ancient Indian history. Weddings of gods and goddesses, the doctrine of incarnations, binding several totemic and divine symbols in one string, change of deities without any change of the religious frame-work, and last but not least, the repeated injunction to treat the whole world as one's own family and use of plural number in all the Vedic prayers clearly point to a deliberate attempt to forge some kind of a formal unity without affecting the diversity of content. In a plural situation, given the absence of a death-wish, this alone appears to be both logical and practical.

Ancient Indian history provides us with all the clues as to the truly Indian reaction-patterns, though these might not have been noticed fully. To take only three points, let us mention how ancient Indians treated their intellectuals, how the ancient chroniclers categorized the schools of philosophy and how the politician dealt with issues, religious or philosophical. In all this, it is clear that there is really no parallel for the ancient Indian situation except the Greek. The medieval European situation was so different from this in form as well as content, basic assumptions as well as intellectual norms, that one wonders, how anyone ever thought of treating the two analogously.

(1) We know that the same society and the same individual who paid to the priest for performing various kinds of rites and rituals, he also at the same time maintained through alms all kinds of priest-baiters and haters. The *Ājivikas*, the Jainas and the Buddhists are only three such growths running parallel to what is supposed to be *the* orthodoxy. It is plain that the number of such sects was very large, everyone being wholly free to start a new sect and agree, disagree, or ignore the existing ones. The curious fact is that even at such an early date no one saw any incongruity in simultaneously patronizing all kinds of mutually exclusive viewpoints.

(2) The now-prevalent division of Indian thought into *āstika*, *orthodox*, and *nāstika*, *heterodox* (the literal meaning of these two terms is believers and non-believers in the authority of the Vedas, and they cannot be rendered as theistic and atheistic) is hardly emphasized in any ancient or even early medieval chronicle. The most common chronicle of this kind, *Sarvadarśana-saṃgraha*, for instance, believes that the proper order in which the schools of Indian thought should be studied is not either according to chronology or on the basis of acceptance or rejection of Vedic authority but according to their distance from or nearness to the Advaita. The great śaṅkara himself believes that what the Buddhists started, the Vaiśeṣikas completed! The whole idea

of treating some sects or schools as forming part of a 'mainstream' is most obviously foreign to all these thinkers and chroniclers.

(3) Religion in India always remained politically neutral. The religion personally followed by the monarch never assumed the proportions of a state religion. This in part explains why, notwithstanding such epithets as the *Vedanindaka*, denouncer of the Vedas, and *asraddha*, lacking in faith, the institution of inquisition is conspicuous only by its absence in ancient India. It was unimaginable that one could be penalized for holding certain beliefs, though that person could certainly be denounced or refuted in debates. Thus, the Buddha described the *Ājīvika* leader Makkhali Gosāla as 'a burden on earth', a person responsible for leading good people astray, but he never, even remotely, hinted at the necessity to do something to stop Gosāla's activities or muffle his voice. People themselves ultimately had the right to choose which creed to follow. Thinkers had no say in the matter. In such circumstances discrimination on religious grounds remained unheard of, be it Buddhist rulers like Asoka and Harsha or fanatically anti-Buddhist like Sasanka of Bengal.

Not many of the facts mentioned here have escaped scholarly attention. Max Weber, for instance, tells us that 'Without becoming a non-Hindu, a Hindu could accept highly important, most characteristic doctrines which every denominational Christian would consider *exclusively* his own.... In Hinduism a teaching may be *orthodox* without being bindingly valid,... indeed, the doctrinal fluidity of Hinduism is not incidental, but, rather, the central issue of 'religion' as we conceive it.' Weber rightly concluded that Hinduism was tolerant to such an extent that it might well be regarded as 'not a religion' in our sense of the word³. What really intrigues one is why, in spite of his close acquaintance with Indian ideological tradition, Weber failed to see that *exclusiveness* characterized his own religion and had no place in India. Moreover, in what sense can a tenet be *orthodox* if it is not bindingly valid? A religion built around a deliberate negation of all doctrinal rigidity has logically no place for terms like *orthodox*, even if it loses its title to be a 'religion' at all. The fact is that there is really no Indian equivalent for the term religion. *Dharma* does not come anywhere near it, devoid as it is of all emotional content as well as promises of communion with the One. What the Semitics have done as a social duty or activity, the Hindu has done individually, privately, each choosing his own approach. His efforts to gain riches or worldly success through the performance of rituals may be public, but that is not the central issue of religion. His efforts for deliverance, for *mukti* or *nirvāṇa*, are necessarily private in which others can have no place except as guides.

IV

Specificities of a multilinear model for the study of the ancient Indian situation require close attention. It has been rightly held that a situation involving

multiplicity, variety or diversity can be studied with the help of a number of different analogies. Bergson, for one, explained the continuing self-expression of the *élan vital* on the analogy of a tree: one in the beginning, diversifying in the process of its historical, temporal, development. Bergson lays great stress on the reality of time. It can be the other way round also—many in the beginning converging into one in course of development. This can be called the *confluence* model as against the earlier *tree* model.

Much can be said about the applicability of these two models to the Indian situation, ancient as well as modern. If it is held that a single race or tribe—say the Dravidians or the Aryans—initiated the formation of Indian culture, which later got diversified into a number of subcultures, we are obviously voting for the tree model. This model has one great merit—it provides ample scope for any amount of multiformity without suggesting some kind of fundamental unity and uniformity. It is particularly useful for explaining the diversity obtaining in Hindu society today, but only on the condition that the entire gamut of ancient culture is treated as a single homogenous unit, forming the trunk of the tree on which so many new and divergent branches have sprouted in the course of India's long history. However, if one is more interested in highlighting the essential unity of modern India, one can take recourse to the confluence model. In that case, Indian culture would assume the shape of a stream which came into being due to the confluence of a number of substreams, occurring at different junctures of its history. Thus, we will be able to explain the presence of diverse elements existing side by side in Indian culture, and establish that by far the Hindu mind is the most catholic. Which of these two models a historian chooses really depends on whether unity is sought to be stressed or diversity. However, there can be no doubt that the old charming myth of 'unity in diversity', or its later variant 'diversity in unity', is the basis for both these models in equal measure. Moreover, historical veracity is apparently not the first concern of the writers, who base their assumptions on either of these two models.

It hardly needs reiteration that historical understanding is not furthered by such efforts at reconciliation. There is no inevitability about it. It is entirely conceivable that a tradition did start as a single stream, and never lost its singularity; instances of such growths are available. Similarly, it is possible that a number of streams run through the same terrain, independent of and parallel to each other, affecting each other not directly but only through contributing to the general climate. Whatever unity for reference such a situation will have will be due to the common terrain and not due to intermingling of streams either at the beginning or at the end. If it is granted that historical understanding is better served by treating the content—the particular—as primary, and the form—the general—only as secondary or derivative, then we will have to adopt this last model for the study of the Indian situation rather than the first two.

Indian tradition started as a geography-bound plurality, and has never substantially changed this character. True, all the numerous centres in this multiple-centred picture had their orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The process would really have been on these lines: beliefs unconsciously and inarticulately held for a long time must have become gradually articulate at some point, and become the established view or the orthodoxy within that particular frame of reference. It must have had a number of votaries, some of whom later grew weary of the established views and felt the need for a reformulation and/or drastic change. This gave rise to a heterodoxy, once again strictly within that particular frame of reference. But the use of the label 'Indian' does not by itself suffice to generate a generalized frame of reference. Even this tag is of recent origin, and can be of little help in explaining the ancient or even the medieval situation. However, the mere geographical label has somehow been supposed to create a single-centred situation. We must view the Indian situation as comprising of a number of particular frames of reference, each with its own orthodoxy giving rise to its own heterodoxy which in turn itself becomes an orthodoxy giving rise to its own heterodoxy, and the process goes on for several millennia. The different particular frames touch each other peripherally, rarely causing any basic shift. Thus, Buddhist thought has its own unbroken tradition of growth. Criticisms by other sects have affected it only in one way, by further strengthening the convictions of Buddhist thinkers. Criticism of Buddhist logic by the Nyāya logicians only prompted the Buddhist logicians to develop their already held ideas in order to meet the criticisms. But this is hardly conducive to the emergence of any kind of confluence, much though it helped in intellectual development. The growth still remained wholly parallel, and this aspect of the situation needs to be fully grasped if we have to understand the peculiarities of India's ideological growth. Neither the tree model nor the confluence model seems to be of much help here.

V

The foregoing discussion is an attempt to show that terms like protest, dissent, heterodoxy (in a generalized sense), deviation from the mainstream, etc. are irrelevant in the Indian context. Ideological divergence obtaining in a plural context cannot be expressed in a terminology clearly implying a unilinear situation. It is indeed a pity that a modern scholar has been obliged to point out chinks in a non-existent monolith. But such are the consequences of a failure to critically evaluate the historical model before putting it into use. Both plurality and protest are undoubtedly instances of discord, yet the two are far from synonymous. We do not come across any movement of dissent, protest or reform in ancient India for the simple reason that we equally miss in that culture any intellectual straitjackets, monolithic structures, claimed monopolies of truth, ideological homogeneity or even a direct or indirect demand for any of these.

The concrete example of an alleged 'dissenter, protester and reformer' from ancient India—Gautama, the Buddha—may further amplify this point. Most works on the Buddhist movement, whether popular manuals or learned tomes, seem to be based on certain unquestioned assumptions. It is supposed that since the time of its stabilization to around the seventh /sixth century BC north Indian society—from modern Panjab to modern Bengal—uniformly accepted the authority of the Vedas and later evolved with enthusiasm the Upanishadic metaphysics which was essentially a departure from the Vedic outlook. (Somehow the Upanishadic departure is not treated as an instance of protest or dissent. It is held to be merely as a continuation or even a 'logical culmination' of the Vedic ideology.) Only towards the end of this period of pristine purity, perhaps owing to an admixture of un-Aryan ideas, we start hearing voices of dissent. Gautama, regarded as a prince due to a gross misunderstanding of the facts, is supposed to have raised a banner of revolt against the dominance of the priestly class and the bloody ritual practices. The fact that he belonged to the warrior caste, which is merely second to the priestly caste, was considered sufficient reason to make Gautama a social rebel, and also a champion of the downtrodden. In the sphere of ideas, there are two schools of opinion. One, led by stalwarts like Coomaraswamy and Radhakrishnan, holds that the Buddha was essentially an adherent of the Upanishadic ideology, though he either chose to use different terms or simplified the message to make it explicable to the masses. The other, including pioneers like Rhys Davids and Oldenberg and scholars like Hiriyanna and Dasgupta, treat the Buddha as an ideological dissenter. Both the schools, however, do not seem to feel the necessity of adducing internal evidence to establish that the Buddha was even acquainted with the Upanishadic ideas and idiom. The obvious anteriority of the latter and a degree of agreement about the ultimate goals has been held to warrant the assumption that the Buddha was influenced by the Upanishads positively or negatively.

It is plain enough that the model implicit in the minds of all these celebrated scholars is unilinear. Because the Buddha belonged to north India as much as the composers of the Upanishads did, and as he definitely came later, he had no option but either to agree with the Upanishadic ideology and propagate it, or dissent from it and protest against it. All this fits into a neat, preconceived, picture so beautifully and, to some minds, so obviously, that no need has been felt to examine the evidence at our disposal or to see whether right conclusions have been drawn from it. The force of prejudice prompted the scholars to treat mere anteriority in time (though not promixity in place) and superficial resemblance in overall aims (though not in the methods to achieve those aims) as proof positive of nothing short of indebtedness. By the same token the Jaina and the *Ājīvika* thinkers too should have been indebted to the Upanishads, to say nothing about the materialists, the fatalists and others. But perhaps, not being 'world-religions' like Buddhism, these other creeds and sects did not deserve much attention.

Let us turn our attention to the evidence. The Pāli Canon and the chief a-canonical writing and commentaries alone can provide us with authoritative information about the views held by the Buddha and his early followers. No other body of literature claims to be a collection of *Buddha-vacana*, the utterances of the Founder. Even a cursory perusal of these records is enough to convince an unbiased mind that the early Buddhists knew of priests but of no priestly establishment. There are undoubtedly many disparaging remarks against the priestly class, including one making fun of the claim that the *brahmanas* were born out of Brahmā's mouth. Names of sages like Vāsishṭha and Vishvamitra too are heard. There is a *Jātaka* devoted to the Buddhist version of the story of Rāma which, needless to add, is completely at variance with the one we read in Vālmīki. There is little doubt that the Buddha treated the priestly class with contempt and rejected their claims of supremacy with disdain. They are always treated as idle gossipers with no worthwhile contribution to make to the general religious debate. Now, in the light of all this, is it reasonable to regard the Buddha as a protester and dissenter? Does a rebel against the establishment treat the allegedly established viewpoint absolutely on par with all kinds of other views? Had Martin Luther given the same amount of importance to Judaism and Islam (both of which formed part of European consciousness of the era) as he did to the Roman Church? He did not *reject* the Pope, he *challenged* him. The Buddha, from all accounts, did not challenge any viewpoint whatever. He first had his own clearly articulated metaphysics, and only then he judged the numerous other creeds, accepting or rejecting them in accordance with their compatibility or lack of it with his own independently formulated ideas.

The issue of the Buddha's relationship with the Upanishads is highly interesting and significant. It will be out of place to go into all the details here,⁴ but here are some of the points which deserve attention. First, as far as the Pāli Canon is concerned, *brāhmanas* were mere liturgists with neither interest in nor capacity for philosophy. If at all, they have always been pictured as unpardonable wasters of time with unfounded speculation. Second, though we hear about a number of Vedic seers, not a single Upanishadic thinker, like Yājñavalkya, has been mentioned, and there is really no reason to think that any were known to the early Buddhists. Third, the Buddha frequently classifies and analyzes views other than his own, and shows passable understanding of the tenets of the Jainas, the *Ājivikas* and the materialists, yet he does not appear to have even a nodding acquaintance with the type of views which characterize the Upanishads. Absolutism, illusionism and pantheism, thus, are not even remotely hinted at in the Buddhist works. The nearest approach to Upanishadic pantheism can be witnessed in the treatment of the wrong view (erroneously translated as heresy by many) *so loko so attā*, 'the world around me is the self which I shall hereafter become, eternal and permanent, everlasting and unchangeable, standing fast like heaven and earth'.⁵ It is not clarified whether 'the world around us' signifies the Upanishadic World-

Soul or the material, mundane world. The adjectives used are equally applicable to both, and anything comparable to World-Soul is nowhere heard of in the Pāli Canon. If this passage is taken to mean that the self would become one with the material world, it is plain materialism. At best this is a non-deliberate misinterpretation of the Upanishadic position. Nothing could be really farther from the Upanishadic viewpoint than materialism, and yet someone supposedly carrying forward the Upanishadic tradition did not bother to ward off such a source of misunderstanding. It hardly needs any argument after all this to prove that the Buddha was neither interested in nor aware of the Upanishadic ideology. He was totally opposed to all types of static, empirically unfounded thinking. Which is sufficient to explain why he *seemed* to be refuting Upanishadic views. That he might have been assuming the truth of the Upanishadic ideas, a position taken by some luminaries, is plainly based on negative evidence alone, and nothing more needs be said about this. Fourth, not only the Upanishadic ideas but even the Upanishadic idiom was not known to the early Buddhists. Thus, the all-important Upanishadic term *Brahma*, in neuter, does not exist in the Pāli language at all. We either hear about a class of gods called Brahmā-gods, in masculine, or the term occurs as a prefix to imply 'perfect' or 'excellent', as in *Brahma-jāla*, 'the perfect net' from which nothing can escape. This term cannot mean anything different in such conjunctions as *brahma-bhūta* and *brahma-vihāra*, though scholars like Radhakrishnan have tried to read metaphysical meanings into these phrases⁶. In brief, there is hardly any conclusive evidence establishing even the Buddha's bare acquaintance with the Upanishadic ideas, much less for his agreement or disagreement with them.

Was the Buddha really a rebel against the birth-based social stratification and a champion of the down-trodden? There can be little doubt that he opened the doors of his Order to people belonging to all the castes and accepted that everyone had a right to strive for deliverance. The lowest caste was not accorded this right by the *smṛitis*. All kinds of people in fact joined his Order. However, there is no reason to think that he overthrew the caste-system as such. He merely questioned it to the extent of elevating the *kṣatriya* caste—to which he himself belonged—to the top (according to the *brāhmaṇas* only given the second place) on the basis of an altogether new theory of caste-origin⁷. As far as the last two castes were concerned, which obviously were the toiling masses creating all the surplus wealth to be appropriated by the first two castes, the Buddha has not much to say. The struggle, if there was one, was only among the sharers of surplus produce, the exploiting section of the society, and hardly concerned the exploited in any meaningful manner. The Buddha clearly ordained that a slave could not join the Order against the wishes of his or her masters. As far as women's position was concerned, the Buddha was hardly a revolutionary. Though he was somewhat more liberal, he left no one in doubt about his real feelings. Thus, it was ordained that even the senior-most and most learned nun had to bow before the junior-most and illiterate monk. Nuns

were not supposed to stay away from male-guardianship. If a couple joined the Order together and jointly sought deliverance, it was supposed that the wife could stay only one step behind the husband and could not move alongside him.

To sum up, it is difficult to see how the Buddha and his associates are regarded as protesters and dissenters, there is not even reasonably clear evidence for it. This interpretation, if anything, appears to fit in and in some way complete the picture created by preconceived notions. Socially, the Buddha does not seem to have questioned or rejected the stratificatory norms. Ideologically since he might not have been exposed to the Upanishadic viewpoint, the question whether he followed it or opposed it is immaterial. That a re-evaluation of the history of Indian thought after discarding the preconceived notions and a unilinear model is indicated is obvious enough. It will go a long way in disposing of the hackneyed stereotypes which have obstructed a really objective understanding of the Hindu mind as we find it today. The very use of the article *the* in pronouncements like 'the Hindu is a world-denying spiritualist, mystic and absolutist' clearly implies a unilinear model for which there was no place in ancient India. Some may lament that a readymade model bodily lifted from medieval Europe will be denied to us. But then we may as well remember that European scholars themselves never try to study their own ancient period with the help of this model.

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2. Cf. Toynbee, Arnold, *A Study of History*, abridged by D C Somerwell, London, OUP: 1962 (reprint), p. 92.
3. Weber, Max, *The Religion of India—The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, translated and edited by Gerth, H.H. and Don Marindale, New York, Free Press: 1958, p. 22. Emphasis supplied.
4. Cf. Pratap Chandra, 'Was Early Buddhism Influenced by the Upanisads?', *Philosophy East and West*, volume 21, number 3 (July 1971).
5. *Majjhima-nikāya*, edited by Trenckner, V and Lord Chalmers, London, Pali Text Society, 3 volumes: 1888-1902, vol. i, p. 137.
6. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., Foreword to *2500 Years of Buddhism*, edited by Bapat, P. V, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi, Publications Division: 1956, 1959, p. xi.
7. Cf. Pratap Chandra, 'Caste Origins and the Social Contract Theory in the Pali Canon', *The Aryan Path*, February, 1973.

Discussion

on Paper by Pratap Chandra

S C MISRA/ Indian historians have not been pursuing the unilinear view of history, and they have also not concerned themselves with the unique. The slogan of 'unity in diversity' has been used politically which Pratap Chandra has demolished, but he has created another one. This is of the tolerance and catholicity of Hinduism. However, then, later, and even now, conformity was demanded in social forms, sometimes to the extreme, although it was required for the upper classes which were integrated, at least in the medieval period. It was not so essential for the rest of the population which had no contact with Brahminic system. Consequently, the terms orthodoxy and heterodoxy become irrelevant and inappropriate even though there is a core of beliefs which existed among various sects. The question I ask is—Was there any contact or interaction between these so-called 'mutually coexisting systems' in ancient India? Is it possible that they existed in a mutually exclusive blissful state of co-existence? Is this ignorance of each other possible?

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Basically the unique has to be built into the general and the general to be based on the unique. But historians in India do usually see the unique first, to see a pattern, which is not the same thing as taking a general view of things. This is illustrated by my views. The dictionary meaning of orthodoxy does not permit the existence of plurality, albeit we may admit one or two orthodox views. But if several orthodoxies existed, as in ancient India, one could choose from one or the other rather than protest. In all these cases, as long as the form was kept intact, the content could be changed. The so-called Buddhist and Jain heterodoxies accepted the caste system—its form—yet they changed the contents. Analysis has to take into account both the form and the content.

The interaction of various schools of thought was there and this has been worked out; specially in a book, *A Critique of Vaisheshic Philosophy* by D N Shastri, which is an important work on Hindu and Buddhist Logic. There was no mutual exclusiveness. But if, for example, *astik* in ancient India meant

those who accepted the authority of Vedas, then the term *nastik* was used for those who did not accept the authority and not for those who are the 'non-believers'; and if again, four out of the six systems of the orthodoxy including the *Vaisheshic* were materialistic and did not believe in God, then, the question of protest did not arise for it was ideological discord. Basically, all these schools were considered as orthodox ones.

N SANJEEVI/ At a given point of time and in certain areas, there must have been a dominant view, if we seek the origin of these various stream of thoughts. Hence, the emphasis has to be made clear, rather than going into the details of plurality, since dominance did exist along with coexistence, as is apparent from the paper.

DEVAHUTI/ The 'unity and diversity' slogan came in at a time when plurality was not in common use, but what it meant was coexistence. Both diversity in unity, and unity in diversity mean the same thing. However, the seeking of a similarity between medieval Europe and ancient India by early scholars has created erroneous models. For instance, today we know that it is erroneous to think of ancient India as more spiritual than materialistic.

At any rate, is it not possible to see the development of different systems as a geographical necessity? Or, was it the result of a consciousness of a culture which is a necessity of civilizational growth? It is true to say that there was hardly any intolerance amongst the groups, for there is little evidence of persecution. Scholars differ about the problem of the Buddha knowing little about the Upanishads; Mrs. Rhys David feels that the Buddha did have a knowledge, which is contrary to what Pratap Chandra has said.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ First, the stereotype of unity came into existence with 19th century Indologists. Second, we can only make guesses regarding the development of different schools in geographical regions. Third, Professor Rhys David does not agree to his wife's view, who has completely misread the evidence, such as the *Dhammapada*.

M S A RAO/ There have been too many hurried generalizations made by Pratap Chandra about sociologists, and the preference for Max Weber and others. Many sociologists have questioned these propositions.

While Pratap Chandra proposes that we should not use Western categories of thought, he himself looks into the ancient Greek situation for comparison, for establishing parallels. The comparative method of course is essential and, therefore, we cannot discard all Western concepts and hypotheses.

The concept of plurality and coexistence has been over-emphasized ignoring dissent and protest, or a series of such debates in ancient India. For example, since Buddhists did try to replace kshatriyas against brahman domination, it indicates that the supremacy of brahmans was attempted to be down-

graded. There were also, we know, controversies between Buddhism, Jainism and Vedantism, which can not be considered as a case of mere plurality.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Basically, the existence of a dominant school, or schools can be disputed, and this is my major contention. I agree that comparative methodology is valid. However, the examples mentioned by Rao reflect discord, not protest. This is a qualitative difference, and I feel a hangover of Max Weber continues, who despite noting diversity and plurality, continues to talk about heterodoxy and orthodoxy in ancient India.

V V JOHN/ Pratap has not presented the evidence correctly. The example of Sophists trying to remove Socrates was given. But there was a definite heresy as referred to, 'in the corruption of youth', because Socrates asks the youth to discard the God which represented orthodoxy.

Pratap wants to disregard unity, but accepts diversity. But the concept of unity may be viewed in an inclusive sense, i.e., letting other people be, rather than take any side. Is this principle of unity not as good as another?

S R MEHROTRA/ Does the existence of diversity, heterogeneity imply that dissent and protest cannot exist, though admittedly it may blur the focus of these movements ?

K J SHAH/ It is clear that in ancient India there were no formal goals to be followed. According to Pratap if people did not believe in God, these were materialists and not spiritualists. But not believing in God does not make one any less spiritual. This would be true if a belief in God was a necessity, and it would also mean that there were formal goals. Perhaps, there were certain fundamental pursuits which may be termed as formal goals. But there were differences even in the description of these formal goals, which represented a difference in the concept of reality, and in the formulation of goals. We should discuss this view that needs to be taken into account.

The use or non-use of Western concepts—a debate on it—for the sake of comparison, is irrelevant without considering the manner of using it. For example, if we take a Western concept and modify it for the Indian situation, this is all wrong. It will not be very useful either for us or the West. Comparative methodology has to be used judiciously.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ The use of the word multiplicity, discord, etc., are also Western concepts, which I have used. But before using them we have to specify the content and meaning of the word, otherwise it creates difficulties. When I referred to the formal goals, I had in mind the goal of deliverance which is common to all, and accepted by all. But there was basically a lip service to this ideal.

K J SHAH/ Why do you say that the formal goal of deliverance was only a lip service?

PRATAP CHANDRA/ In *Sankhaya* bondage is not considered itself serious, so it was lip service to deliverance.

J S GREWAL/ Pratap has exclusively dealt with thought systems, ignoring rituals and other beliefs, which are also important. But supposing this position of no dissent or protest is accepted, along with discord, how do we approach the problem of mutual discords in ancient India?

PRATAP CHANDRA/ There were a multiplicity of tribes and races of the Aryans, and also non-Aryans.

R O DHAN/ If we refer to tribal communities, this will support Pratap. For instance, tribal political organizations, are based on so many villages, making one particular *parha*. But so many *parhas* in a sense were self-contained. In the Oraon community there is *parha* system, which is a section of the community with their own rules and regulations. In the case of disparity being the *parhas* there was a council—the *panchayats*—which is a very powerful body that takes unanimous decisions which have to be followed up. Therefore, there was little scope for disagreement, once the *panchayat* decided everything. Moreover, communities in the *parhas* were homogeneous communities, with little scope for individuality with such a powerful *panchayat*.

LEELA DUBE/ Pratap has emphasized thought and not the rituals and practices, which were very important. The fact is that in Hinduism the instruments of control have been structural. If so, this would imply protest, especially against ritualistic aspects. Again, the elevation of kshatriyas above brahmans by the Buddha refers to a form of protest. Even if one speaks of symbiosis, this also refers to common norms between various groups. The argument that tribes were independent and equal to other Hindus is very simplistic, because dominance is an essential part of relationship of groups. Both in symbiosis and autonomic existence there is always economic interaction and conflict, representing dominance in such situations. This does not exclude the existence of autonomy in tribes. Moreover, the lack of evidence, which Pratap has emphasized, does not prove that the converse is true.

Suresh Chandra

Ahimsa, an Indigenous Weapon of Protest: Philosophical Presuppositions*

IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL UNREST—DISSENT AND PROTEST—the nature of the indigenous-traditional-weapon of *ahimsa* needs to be considered. Or shall we accept Mao's thought that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'? Against this, shall we accept the Gandhian thought that political power should grow without the use of the gun, and, to get rid of the gun, it is necessary to destroy the gun? Cannot we use *ahimsa* as an instrument for curing the political and non-political ailments of India. Or, is what succeeded in overthrowing the foreign rule once now being used in extending an invitation to foreign rule? Are not the recent diseases of *gheraos* and hunger and non-hunger strikes, the sort of activities which were taught by Gandhiji himself? Has not the *ahimsa* technique of *satyagrah* become these days the *himsa* technique of *duragrah*? Shall we or shall we not blame Gandhiji for the present chaotic condition of our country? Such questions as these would naturally arise if we discussed the problem of *ahimsa* in its present political context. These are important questions, but need to be discussed in the context of political reform, interpretation or administration in general.

The other crisis which we are facing today can be described as the spiritual crisis. The name of Mahatma Buddha is associated with this crisis. The Buddha used *ahimsa* as one of the weapons for solving the spiritual needs of a man. In using this weapon he revolted against the Vedic religion. The Vedas prescribed the sacrifice of living beings as a part of the fulfilment of a man's spiritual needs. The Buddha was puzzled to see that the killing of animals should be treated as a means for the liberation of man, i.e., a man may survive in *this* world by killing other living creatures. The Buddha failed to discover

*In preparing this paper I have made extensive use of the material from one of my papers, read in the seminar on "The Theory and Technique of Ahimsa", organized by the Department of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University, on the occasion of Gandhi Centenary in 1968.

a connection between the sacrifice of a living creature and the liberation of a man from the cycle of births and deaths. He was convinced that *himsa* could not lead to liberation. And, killing of a living creature, whether as an act of sacrificial ritual, or for the sake of one's kitchen, is an act of *himsa*. For him, instead, it was love and affection for living creatures that could pave a way for liberation. Thus, Buddha revolted against Hinduism, to start a new religion, a way of life and a social movement. Therefore, whether the weapon of *ahimsa* can solve all the spiritual problems of a man is a question that requires serious consideration. But in referring to *ahimsa* are we restricted to referring to the negative act of refraining from killing an animal? What sort of relationship is the relationship between vegetarianism and the liberation of a man? Such questions as these would naturally arise if we discuss the issue of *ahimsa* in its spiritual context. But these questions clearly belong to the sphere of religion, and cannot be discussed here.

The concern of this paper is to clear certain general misconceptions and confusions about *ahimsa*, and specially some philosophical presuppositions, if any. The method of inquiring into ordinary discourse has been adopted here for discussion, in a sense following the two saints, the Buddha and Gandhiji—hopefully without doing any disservice to them. The ordinary discourse is the discourse of the masses, of the common people. And Gandhiji, perhaps also the Buddha, lived in, and, for the sake of, the masses.

Gandhi and Buddha as philosophers

In our ordinary everyday discussion we sometime refer to Gandhiji as a philosopher, and consequently his philosophy as the philosophy of *ahimsa*. The words *philosopher* and *philosophy* are in such contexts used in an extended derivative sense. For Gandhiji was not, and perhaps never claimed himself to be, an academic philosopher. His philosophy of *ahimsa* is not an academic philosophy in the strict sense of the term, i.e., in the sense of Nagarjuna, Sankara, Vasubandhu and their disciples. The Gandhian philosophy of *ahimsa* is not recognized as on the same level as academic philosophies of *Sunyavada* and *Mayavada*. This, however, is no disqualification for recognizing and treating one as a supremely important human person. Not only ordinary people, even the selected few, i.e., the academicians, have given highest regard to Gandhiji, unanimously bestowing on him the title of the Mahatma. The status of Gandhiji in this respect is exactly like that of the Buddha, for both of them are philosophers by courtesy.

Though himself not an academic philosopher, the teachings of the Buddha attracted the academic philosophers of such high calibre as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu. Gandhiji has remained unfortunate in this respect. It is the political and pragmatic rather than the intellectual and the academic interests that have led people to flock around Gandhiji. This sort of phenomenon is natural because of the *official* seal put on the teachings of Gandhiji. But this does not decrease the importance of Gandhiji's thought and teachings. Owing

to the extreme caution they are guided by, academic philosophers are slow to react. It took hundreds of years for them to discover interesting features in the teachings of the Buddha. We cannot exclude the possibility of some future Nagarjunas and Vasubandhus discovering features of interests in Gandhian teachings. But today's academic philosophers are responsible for neglecting the proper philosophical elements of Gandhiji's teachings, since they are busy with the side issues of philosophy rather than with philosophy proper. They forget completely that Buddha's thought had a richer secondary proliferation than that of Gandhiji. Buddhist academicians did not waste their resources on the side issues of Buddha's thought. To take an example of a socio-religious fringe of Gandhiji's thought, he attracted much attention on account of the fact that he used to live in the sweepers' colonies. But Buddha surpassed Gandhiji in this respect. Though a prince once, Buddha was living on alms, and did not make a distinction between begging at the door of a sweeper or begging at the door of a brahman. At any rate, let us turn to a discussion of the actual philosophical issues.

Ethics of Ahimsa

When in our everyday discourse we talk of *ahimsa* we clearly use it as a term of contrast to *himsa*. If the word *himsa* is completely eliminated from our discourse, the word *ahimsa* would also be eliminated. Either both or none of the two can survive in discourse. This fact has important ethical consequences. If language is the mirror of reality, then to have *ahimsa* in the world would mean that it is not within our control to eliminate *himsa* from the world. What is within our control is simply to decrease the quantity of *himsa* from the world. Suppose, following the example of John Stuart Mill on pleasure and pain, we consider *ahimsa* to have a measurable character, then, a universe in which there is a greater amount of *ahimsa* is to be preferred to a universe in which there is less. But to increase the quantity of *ahimsa* we have to decrease the quantity of *himsa*. There is, therefore, a co-relation between *himsa* and *ahimsa*: fall of *himsa* leads to the rise of *ahimsa*. Of course, this ethical relationship between *himsa* and *ahimsa* has its metaphysical presupposition that by decreasing the quantity of *himsa* we are not bringing inactivity to the world. The world continues to remain active owing to the dominance of the *ahimsa* element.

The question arises, can we introduce the notion of quality in *ahimsa*? Can we consider that one case of *ahimsa* is superior in quality to another case of *ahimsa*? Yes, one may speak about both the quality and the quantity of *ahimsa*. Any one case of *ahimsa* may be described as superior in quality to another. To clarify the distinction let us consider again the views of the Buddha and Gandhiji. For the Buddha the application of the concepts of *himsa* and *ahimsa* was not simply restricted to human beings. Perhaps all of us have heard the story of Gautama's reaction when the act of *himsa* was performed on a bird. Gautama had the same sort of sorrow for the injured bird which he had for

the injured person. When Gautama became the Buddha there was not much of a psychical change in his personality. It is not only human beings but all conscious beings, in the eyes of the Buddha, who deserved *ahimsak* treatment. We do not hear any such stories about Gandhiji's affection for the lower animals. We hear a different set of stories about Gandhiji's affection. Gandhiji is reputed for his *ahimsak* attitude towards all human beings. For him, the suffering of a Churchill and a Birla are as good examples of suffering as is the suffering of an Indian coolie or a municipal sweeper. Gandhiji seems to have more interest in *himsa* being eliminated from the human sphere. So, Gandhiji can be said to have introduced the notion of quality in *ahimsa*, because of the fact that his love for the lower animals is subordinate to his love for human beings. On occasions, lesser amount of *ahimsa* may be given preference to the greater amount of *ahimsa*, provided the former is superior in quality to the later.

Let us now consider the consequences of the ethical teachings of Gandhiji and the Buddha by analyzing the following situation. Suppose that there is one human being and two chickens, and we are left with no other alternative except to sacrifice either the human being in question or the two chickens. Then if one is a Gandhian one will not hesitate in sacrificing two chickens, for quantitatively less amount of *ahimsa* is preferred, if it happens to be superior in quality. *Ahimsa* in the human context is superior in quality to *ahimsa* in the context of lower creatures like animals, birds and insects. But the situation is different if one follows the teachings of the Buddha strictly; a situation which is perhaps not acceptable to most of us. If two chickens can be saved by sacrificing a human being then we may have succeeded in having a greater amount of *ahimsa* in the world. And, a world in which there is greater amount of *ahimsa* is to be preferred to the world in which there is lesser amount of *ahimsa*. Of course, there is difficulty in drawing these conclusions about the Buddha and Gandhiji. We have to face the paradox that Gandhiji was a strict vegetarian, and the Buddha died on account of the fact that he failed to digest raw pork. However, as ethical philosophers it is not our job to solve such paradoxes. But one cannot avoid noticing a minor consequence. There is a popular belief that vegetariansim is necessarily connected with *ahimsa*, that one cannot exhibit one's *ahimsak* nature if one is not a vegetarian. The connection between *ahimsa* and vegetarianism is contingent, one may believe, in *ahimsa* without being a vegetarian.

Epistemology of Ahimsa

The epistemological implications of *ahimsa* are no less significant than are its ethical implications. *Ahimsa* presupposes a revolutionary concept of a person, a concept to which Peter Strawson and Stuart Hampshire have recently drawn attention. *Ahimsa* presupposes the existence of actions, whether they are thought-actions, speech-actions or other sorts of physical-actions. For the ideal or goal of *ahimsa* is to achieve *ahimsa* in all these forms of actions, i.e.,

ahimsa of *mana*, *vachana* and *karma*. So a human person is an agent who acts, and acts through one or all these forms of action. The consequence is clear: If there are no actions and no agents who act, then there is no *ahimsa* and of course, no *himsa*. The words *himsa* and *ahimsa* have lost their meaning. Till recently the Western world was haunted by the idea that a person is nothing but a passive receiver of sensations from without, i.e., either God was supposed to be responsible for the distribution of sensations to different persons as suggested by Bishop Berkeley, or the idea of dead matter, as given by John Locke. A person's own contribution is either nothing or very insignificant. If we are serious about these views, then we are nothing but screens for the exhibition of films on our person. It does not matter whether the operator is responsible for running the machine to exhibit film on our persons, or that the machines are automatic and do not require any operator. Our own position remains insignificant with either of these alternatives.

However, we are not simply sensitive or insensitive screens. We are agents who act, and act, as Strawson would say, 'On each other, and act in accordance with common human nature'. Strawson's view is quite consistent with the presuppositions of *ahimsa*. It is by accepting the possibility of action on each other that the occasion for *ahimsa* arises. But such a possibility of action, though necessary, is not sufficient for the purpose in question. For it can very well be imagined that different persons have their different natures, and that there is no common or identical human nature except the possession of common physical features. So, to the condition of 'action on each other' we have to add a further condition that human nature, both physical and mental is common. For, 'if a British imperialist or an Indian capitalist does not share my nature, then there is no point in staging a *satyagrah* before him. I feel pity when I see others in distress. I feel guilty when I steal others' property. I repent for my bad behaviour'. And, so on. The theory of *ahimsa* is grounded in such facts as these. 'I deserve a reciprocal treatment from others, i.e., others should have pity on me, repent for their bad behaviour towards me and should feel guilty for stealing my property'. If others do not have any such feelings, then the instrument of *ahimsa* has failed in achieving the desired result.

In bringing to our notice the 'possibility of action on each other' and the 'common human nature', the other issue which Strawson is considering is the issue of liberation from solipsism. If a man is nothing but a complex of private sensations, then there is no liberation from solipsism. Freedom from solipsism is also a precondition for *ahimsa*. For one may consider one's *self* to have achieved *ahimsa* elements in one's speech-acts, thought-acts and other physical-acts, only when one may consider at least the possibility of *others* to have achieved *ahimsa* elements in their speech-acts, thought-acts and physical-acts. It does not make sense to talk of one's acts unless it makes sense to talk of the acts of *other* persons.

Metaphysics of Ahimsa

Ahimsa involves a number of metaphysical presuppositions. Only one such presupposition may be taken up here. While discussing the epistemological presupposition of *ahimsa* above, mention was made of human agents and their acts. But what would be the situation if these agents and acts do not occur in the sort of world in which we think they occur, i.e., if the world is not as it is supposed to be by a descriptive metaphysician? What if these agents are not free to act as we suppose ourselves to be free to act? What if the agents are not praised and blamed for their actions, and are not held responsible for what they do? Freedom to act and be held responsible for one's actions, seems to be a basic presupposition of *ahimsa*. If the world in which we are living is a predetermined world, then it becomes meaningless to talk about changing oneself and others through *ahimsa*. If a British imperialist is determined to misrule, and an Indian capitalist determined to suck the blood of the masses, then *satyagraha* in whatever form, becomes a mock-show, of course a predetermined mock-show.

The question now arises, whether we should allow the possibility of agents and acts to occur in a non-spatial world, i.e., shall we accept the existence of disembodied agents? For several reasons disembodiment seems to be an essential condition for *ahimsa*, and perhaps Gandhiji believed in life after death. One must be given sufficient time to realise the ideal of *ahimsa*, i.e., to give up one's *himsak* nature. If one cannot realize the *ahimsak* nature in this world, through whatever reason, one must be allowed to continue his efforts, i.e., one must be allowed to go on living without a body. Self-torture (self-control) was one of the *ahimsa* techniques taught by Gandhiji. What if in the course of such a torture one dies? Again, what would happen if a *satyagrahi* died in the course of his action? Gandhiji has to allow him to continue his life after the death of his body, otherwise all hopes will be shattered. The metaphysics of *ahimsa* is clearly Strawsonian type of metaphysics, perhaps with the difference that a disembodied spirit has not to live a secluded life.

The metaphysics of *ahimsa*, on account of its descriptive presuppositions, comes in conflict with the revisionary metaphysics taught by Krishna in Bhagwad Gita, i.e., 'If I am not a killer and my enemy is not being killed in spite of the fact that I find myself piercing my sword into the body of my enemy, then I am not a free agent responsible for my actions. I cannot prescribe any prohibitions on my thought-actions, speech-actions and physical-actions. They are not *my* actions, they are the actions of Krishna. If I am not the person who inflicts injury on others, who steals and whose dealings are dishonest, then I am not the person who has to be liberated from these acts. The words *ahimsa* and *himsa* have no use in my language'. Thus, the metaphysics of the Gita has transcended the distinction between *himsa* and *ahimsa* by transcending the human agents and acts. There remains only Krishna in the scene who lives a purely solipsistic life. Whether he does or does not suffer from the logical absurdities of solipsism is a question that cannot be answered, for sometimes He deludes Himself to be living a non-solipsistic life.

Concluding Remarks

The difference between Gandhiji and the Buddha is a difference between a person devoted to politics and a person devoted to religion. Gandhiji talked and talked and talked till the last moment of his life. As against this massive amount of talking, most of the time the Buddha kept silence. Gandhiji wanted to live a dignified life in this world, the life of a free Indian rather than that of a slave of the British. But one remains in bondage whether one lives a dignified or an undignified life. Therefore, the Buddha was indifferent to the question of political freedom. So far as the political scene is concerned, the success of *ahimsa* seems to depend on the fear of *himsa*. For example, citizens of India, whether they were the rulers or the ruled, were quite afraid of Emperor Ashoka's ruthless nature. Therefore, these citizens had no courage to create trouble when Ashoka embraced *ahimsa* as a way of life. Perhaps it was the fear of a violent revolt of the masses, the possibility of a large-scale *himsa*, that led the British to pay homage to Gandhiji's idea of *satyagrah*. It is impossible for *ahimsa* to exist in this world if there is no *himsa* in this world. The love and compassion for living beings presupposes killing and murder of living beings. Though bitter, this is the truth about life in *this* world. The possibility of a world better than *this* world is not ruled out. But it is impossible for us to imagine a world which is wholly unlike our present world.

Discussion

on Paper by Suresh Chandra

N SANJEEVI/ Is the illustration given of Gandhiji and the two chickens, imaginary or real? Was the ruthlessness of Ashoka's rule a fact?

SURESH CHANDRA/ The example given is a construction of an argument of an ethical view, which may or may not be real. Ashoka's ruthlessness is an historical fact, specially his conquest of Kalinga. Ashoka was not *ahimsak* while he was establishing his empire, it is only afterwards that he turned to it.

V V JOHN/ When we are talking about *ahimsa* and *himsa*, are we talking about the real world? For example, it is not possible to talk about health if the world did not know about ill health. But this would be a different formulation than discussing problems of universal health. Suresh Chandra's formulation is difficult to follow.

SURESH CHANDRA/ Logically, we can imagine a world in which there is only *ahimsa*, but so far as the immediate possibility of the problem of contrast is concerned, it has relevance in terms of the external world in which there is no possibility of eliminating *himsa* totally. Both a quantitative and qualitative distinction must be made, while discussing *himsa* and *ahimsa*.

C PARVATHAMMA/ In material—daily living—a great deal of *himsa* is involved, rather than following a philosophy or technique of *ahimsa*. This is true, for example, in the case of Gandhi. Did he not in his *ahimsak* manner use coercive methods to make Ambedkar sign the Poona Pact in 1932? Again, since Ambedkar embraced Buddhism, was he nearer to Gandhi?

SURESH CHANDRA/ *Ahimsa* was, I feel, only a political weapon for Gandhi, while it was a spiritual weapon for the Buddha. Ambedkar probably embraced Buddhism, so that his followers would not become Christians.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ To put a hypothetical problem in the light of the problem presented, if a person has to make a choice between 'killing an animal and killing a man', what choice would he, Gandhi, have taken? Or any believer of non-violence have taken? Similarly, what is the choice between killing one man or two men, if it is a question of reducing the amount of violence in the world? We can move further from this situation, to a political one which involves British Imperialists and Indian capitalists. Here, if violence is being perpetrated by them on the masses, then the latter have either a choice of being non-violent and increasing the violence inflicted by the political rulers, or of reducing violence in terms of killing political rulers. In view of your argument that we have to reduce the quantum of violence in the world, would a believer in non-violence take the latter course of action?

K J SHAH/ To clarify the point about what choice Gandhi would make, there is clear evidence that he said, if a woman was being attacked then the use of violence was quite justified rather than standing aside non-violently through cowardice. Even in the case of the animal-man choice, Gandhi did say that if the crops are being destroyed by monkeys and many human lives are involved, then the monkeys should be killed in preference.

I have a fundamental difference with Suresh Chandra, because the entire paper reflects a technical understanding of philosophy, rather than philosophy as such. It seems he has differentiated between academic philosophers and philosophers as such, giving importance to the former. But this is not defensible, logically, for the entire approach is vitiated. On the one hand, Suresh Chandra claims not to be a political reformer, administrator or politician but he forgets that there is such a thing as a political philosopher or philosophy, from which ideas and questions could be drawn. He could have discussed, say, whether *ahimsa* which was once used as a weapon for *satyagrahya* is nowadays being used for *duragraha*. Therefore, the questions raised about *himsa* and *ahimsa* are nothing special, for these questions could be raised about anything else. The problem raised, therefore, does not arise out of *ahimsa* or *himsa* but has been superimposed on it.

SURESH CHANDRA/ Will it solve the issue, if I add that I am not a political philosopher? Your criticism mainly indicates what has not been said in my paper. But this argument can go on *ad infinitum*.

Romila Thapar

Ethics, Religion and Social Protest in the First Millennium BC in Northern India*

THE FIRST MILLENNIUM BC WITNESSED A SEEMINGLY SPONTANEOUS BURST OF new ideologies in areas that subsequently became nuclear regions for major civilizations. The impression is one of a chain of apparently similar developments linking the then known world. The geographical reach of these civilizations was relatively confined, and allowed the formation of a network of connections resulting from conquest, trade, and religious missions. The almost simultaneous and sustained period of speculative thought throughout this area resulted either from the juxtaposition of a number of seminal regions and their inter-connections, or from internal developments within each society that broke the relative quiescence of the earlier bronze-age cultures.

The sixth to third centuries BC in northern India saw the emergence of patterns of thought that were embryonic to the evolution of what was called in later centuries the Indian ethos. This paper is an attempt to observe the historical anatomy of this period and to point up the intellectual processes that gave a legitimacy to these patterns. The focus is narrow and concentrates on Buddhism, seen not merely as the teaching of a single individual but rather as a wider response to a particular doctrine and as a reaction to the changing milieu with which it was associated.

The middle of the first millennium introduces a new ideological perspective, which, although touched upon marginally in Vedic literature, is more fully developed in the teachings of what came to be called 'the heterodox sects'. To the extent that Buddhism subsumes this new perspective, it is convenient to juxtapose the polarity of Vedic thought with that of Buddhism. The primary concern of the new attitude is with the perception of change, the recognition that the context during this period was different from any that had

*Reprinted by permission of DAEDALUS, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, Massachusetts. Spring 1975, *Wisdom, Revelation, and Doubt: Perspectives on the First Millennium BC*.

existed before. The outcome of this recognition was the growth of ideologies that were at the same time innovative and germinal to the social and religious philosophy and ethical thought of subsequent periods. This carried within it the elements both of pessimism at the passing of the old order and of optimism in having discovered a way to deal with the changed situation. The *way* as perceived by the Buddha was arrived at through an innovation in ideology—the notion of causation. Causation in turn highlighted other aspects of innovative thinking, some entirely new, others resulting from the extension of existing ideas.

To understand the perception of change at this time and the need for a new ideology the authors of these ideas have to be seen in a historical context. The priorities in their questions and the kinds of avenues which they explored in a search for answers were not unconnected with the historical milieu in which they lived. They appeared in response to the essentially urban civilization of the Ganges valley. This is often termed the 'second urbanization' of early India, the first having been that of the third millennium in the Indus valley. The antecedents to this second urbanization point to a shift in geographical location from the nuclear area of the third millennium. The Indus civilization had declined by the middle of the second millennium BC, and the new culture of the Ganges civilization grew and matured on the other side of the watershed during the first millennium BC, seemingly unconnected with the earlier copper-age civilization. Technologically the new urbanization was based on iron, the widespread domestication of the horse, the extension of plough agriculture, and a far more sophisticated market economy than that of the earlier period. Until recently it was believed that the new civilization grew under the aegis of nomadic pastoralists speaking an Indo-European language, Sanskrit, who had conquered the existing inhabitants, possibly destroyed the bronze-age cities, and had given rise to the new civilization in the process of settling down in the Ganges valley—thus moving, as it were, from the age of the heroes to that of princes and traders. But fresh evidence has suggested that this discontinuity is more imagined than real: many aspects of the later culture bear the impress of the earlier civilization in spite of the considerable difference in the physical location.¹

Technological changes were not the only indication of a new historical context, for these changes coincided with various other developments. Tribal identity gradually gave way to territorial identity. The territorial units, or *janapadas*, that emerged were named after the *janas* (tribes) settled thereon such as Gandhara, Kuru, Pancala, Matsya, Cedi, Kasi, Kosala, Magadha, etc. Lineage, speech, and customary law were the three criteria of identity and status in the earlier tribal society, with lineage being central to political control and land ownership. The Kshatriya tribes were the landowning tribes, who belonged to either the Candravamsi (Lunar) or the Suryavamsi (Solar) lineages that in later centuries were to become the royal lineages. The location of the two was distinct, with the Candravamsi lineages centred in the

Doab, and extending southward and westward, and the Suryavamsi centred in the middle Ganges plain. The separate identity of the Doab and South Bihar is evident at every point. Cultivated land was initially owned in common by members of the Kshatriya lineage—the Khattiyas of Buddhist literature—although much of the actual tilling appears to have been done by the *dasas* (slaves) and *bhritakas* (hired labourers and servants).² Lineage rights thus included land ownership, and lineage connections were carefully recorded. This accounts for the predominantly Kshatriya oligarchic political organization in many *janapadas*.

The stress on kinship ties was further emphasized by the use of the word *jati* (assigned by birth). It occurs first in a late text and is used in the sense of an extended family.³ In time, the references to *jana* decreased and those to *jati* increased, until in Buddhist literature *jati* is used in the sense of caste, implying an endogamous kinship group, ranked in a list of specialized occupations and service relationships reflecting an increase in social stratification. The bi-polarity of purity and pollution remained an important characteristic of the classification by *varna*, but this classification was of a more theoretical kind involving initially four (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra) and subsequently five (with the addition of the *pancamma* or untouchable) groups in society, and eventually became more closely related to ritual than to social status. *Jati* slowly became the gauge of a more precise assessment of the socio-economic status of a group, but the criteria of status continued to include ritual status (*varna*).

During the time of the Buddha (sixth to fifth centuries BC) a major change in the agrarian structure was the emergence of large states owned by individual Kshatriya families; the criterion of wealth came to be associated more with land and money, and less with cattle which had been the measure of riches in earlier Vedic literature. The transfer of land took place largely within the same social group that had earlier maintained joint ownership. As an adjunct to this development of a landed class, there is a noticeable increase in the categories of wage labourer, hired labourer, and slave. The slave had the *varna* status of a Sudra, which was particularly necessary for those who worked as domestic slaves, the more common category met within the Indian sources. A text of the late first millennium BC mentions the price of a slave as being a hundred pieces of money; by comparison, a pair of oxen was twenty-four pieces.⁴ Slaves were probably expensive even in earlier centuries and could not therefore be used too extensively in production.

The intensification of agriculture provided the economic base for the growth of towns in the Ganges valley. Many of the cities, apart from being important commercial centres, were also the capitals of the *janapadas* such as Kausambi, Kasi, Ayodhya and Rajagriha. These were not the temple-cities of bronze-age civilization, but were the nuclei of the affluent and the natural habitat of the *setthi-gahapatis*, the immensely wealthy traders and financiers. The flexibility of a market economy was facilitated by three innovations—the use of

a script, the consequent issuing of promissory notes, letters of credit, and pledges, and the introduction of money in the form of silver and copper punch-marked coins issued initially, it has been suggested, by traders' guilds. These, in turn, resulted in the new profession of trading in money, and the appearance of the banker deriving his wealth from usury. Unlike the Buddhist texts, the Brahman sources disapprove of usury, although the censure is restricted to Brahmans' fraternizing with those who live off usury.⁵ Apart from the archaeological evidence, another indication, albeit indirect, of the growth of cities is the rapid rise of Jainism when with the prohibition on agricultural professions and restriction on ownership of land, trade became the predominant occupation of the Jains. The discovery of new routes and the revival of old routes were further incentives to trade.⁶

The city produced its own social stratification, where the *sresthin* (merchant or banker) was the most powerful and where the institutional base was that of the *sreni* (guild). This explains why various religious sects competed for the patronage of the *sresthins*.⁷ Yet in Brahminical literature the trader is not included among the superior social groups. The *varna*-ranking of the *Vaishya* (trader) in the third position may have been irksome to those who had such access to wealth. Furthermore, power in Brahminical terms was connected with ownership of land; although not forbidden to the *sresthin*, land was by no means his primary source of wealth. Up to a point there was a distinction between the urban and rural elite—the *setthi/sresthin* and *Khattiya/Kshatriya*—because they derived their income from different sources. But some of the *Khattiyas* who owned estates were also town-dwellers, and thus formed another group alongside traders and merchants.

The guild was emerging as an essential institution of urban life, acting as a centre of both professional and kin cohesion. The recognition of *sreni-dharma* (the customary law of the guilds) as legitimate law by the end of the millennium is another indication of the powerful status of the *sreni*.⁸ Ultimately it evolved into an agency of caste organization where the larger and better established guilds took on *jati* status; no less important was the role of the guilds in later centuries as patrons of the heterodox sects.

The lower orders of the guild were the *Karmakaras* (artisans) and the *antevasikas* (apprentices), who were nevertheless still superior to the *dasabhrataka* (slaves and hired labourers). These, together with the cultivators, were all included in the rank of *Sudras*. In Brahminical texts, their low rank was maintained by the legal fiction that they were of mixed caste origin. The gradation among the *Sudras* ran from the *sacchudra* (clean *Sudra*) to the edge of untouchability. The untouchables constituted the fifth major group. Their untouchability derived from their being considered polluting either because of their occupation as scavengers, such as the *Candalas* and *Doms* and those who maintained the cremation grounds, or because they belonged to primitive tribes such as the *Nisada* and the *Bhilla*. Their speech was alien and their manner of life was strange. Even the Buddhists despised the *Candalas*. The

inequities of city life further aggravated the degradation of these groups, already declared impure on account of ritual pollution.

The rise of political authority as symbolized in systems of government and the concept of the state were explained in a variety of ways. Vedic literature had connected the emergence of kingship with the emergence of government and stressed that the qualities of leadership in battle and elements of divinity were essential to kingship.⁹ By the middle of the first millennium, tribal egalitarianism had surrendered to the evolution of a system of government that, whether oligarchic or monarchical, was explained as concerning itself with the problems of social disharmony, the need for authority, and the justification for revenue collection. The Buddhist theory emphasized the perfection of society in the pre-government age, thus implying that government had become an unfortunate necessity,¹⁰ through the diffusion of social disharmony resulting from family discord and private property. Seeking a solution, people had gathered together and elected a leader—the *mahasammata* (the Great Elect)—in whom they invested the authority to maintain law and order; in payment for this service the *mahasammata* was paid a share of the revenue. Significantly the Buddhist theory emphasizes contract and seems not to have had any notion of royal divinity. The *Mahabharata* expresses a similar idea, but with a greater emphasis on the notion that societies without governments result in anarchy; the anarchic society is described as a state of *matsyanyaya* (the law of the fish), where the big fish devour the smaller ones.¹¹ In this theory, the king also contracts to maintain law and order, but an element of divinity is introduced in his actual appointment as king.

These theories reflect an increasing sense of alienation where it becomes necessary to enforce harmony, since the pristine natural harmony of society has disappeared. They also reflect the acceptance of the idea of authority based on power and not necessarily on kinship alone. The *janapadas* were coalescing into territorial states. By the fifth century BC competition for power had already developed among the stronger of the major *janapadas*, such as Kasi, Kosala and Magadha, where even close kingship ties were ignored to further political gains. Magadha was to emerge as the most powerful, ultimately becoming the nucleus of the Mauryan empire, which was built on the conquests of Chandragupta Maurya in the fourth century BC and comprised, during the reign of his grandson Ashoka, almost the entire Indian subcontinent and eastern Afghanistan. With the growth of political authoritarianism and a complicated state machinery, it is not surprising that the justification for the emergence of government came to be based on the necessity for taxation and the need to maintain law and order.¹²

Two co-existing systems of economic redistribution came into being and sometimes into conflict as well. One, at the level of the state, derived its income from taxes, tributes, and fines and redistributed it through awards, salaries, grants, and expenditures on public works and ceremonies. But the redistribution was not equitable, and the prestige economy, particularly in

the monarchical states, consumed a large part of the income. The second system, on a lesser scale, was confined to the merchants and bankers of the cities; among them the ethic of redistribution was such that substantial sums were retained as capital for further investment.¹³ They were doubtless irritated by the prestige economy of the state. That the second system could function in the cities points to their more diffused political authority; this is also suggested by the absence of citadels in these cities. To some extent money liberated the financier from overarching political control.

Caste structure at this time grew out of a variety of inter-relationships between groups. The purity-pollution dichotomy, which above all demarcated the Brahman from the untouchable and which was absent in the earlier period, is by now well established. The *arya-dasa* dichotomy deriving from ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences in the Rg Vedic texts was now replaced by the *arya-sudra* dichotomy, where the ethnic differences are minimal and the main criteria are the use of Sanskrit and the observance of the *varna* rules. Non-aryas are *mleccha* (the barbarians or the impure) and are generally ranked as Sudras except in later centuries, when foreign conquerors such as the Indo-Greeks had to be given the dubious status of 'degenerate Kshatriyas'. The formation of new castes, theoretically resulting from the intermixing of the original four, was probably a more open system than has hitherto been recognized. The evidence from subsequent centuries suggests that new *jatis* arose as a result of incorporating tribes and guilds and, still later, religious sects into caste society.

The complexity of the new society is clearly reflected in the need for codifying the laws of the various social groups, which is what is aimed at in the Brahminical *Dharma-sutras*. The purpose of the laws is to differentiate between the various social groups generally identified as those of *jana*, *jati*, and *varna*. These, however, are made part of a cohesive view of society. There is an implicit belief that the demarcation of differences would lead to a resolution of tensions, an attitude that could only have been feasible in the absence of a situation of conflict. Also implicit in the *Dharma-sutras* is the Brahman's claim to being the arbiter of the law. There was no overt challenge to this claim since the codification did not aim at a uniformity of laws, but, on the contrary, to the recognition of their diversity. The Buddhist social code, on the other hand, stressed broad ethical principles of general application to a variety of social groups in an attempt to integrate earlier as well as more recently emergent groups into the new patterns. The integration was easier at the theoretical level. At the practical level there was a tendency to separate ritual status (*varna*) from actual status (*jati*). Social roles were not entirely dependent on the one or the other. The older traditions and norms were thus placated, and the new entrants into the social hierarchy were not entirely disappointed. However, the demarcation was in fact by no means facile or simplistic. Many of the later subtleties and intricacies of caste relationships emanate from this early attempt at demarcation.

It was apparent that a condition of permanence was neither feasible nor possible in the world of reality where all was flux. Even the above brief survey of the historical scene shows that the condition of constant change could not be ignored.¹⁴ It affected the assumptions of the philosophers of the time and is still reflected in the prevailing intellectual systems. The consciousness of change is perhaps seen most clearly in the fundamental problem of human salvation or liberation in which three interrelated aspects were emphasized—the ethic of the individual in terms of his own moral consciousness and his search for release from the bonds of human existence, the verification of ultimate knowledge so essential to the working out of a means to salvation, and finally the discovery of a path to salvation. The prime motivation was to find an answer that would subsume changing material conditions and yet remain viable. The Buddhist attempt to analyze these problems makes a point of contrasting the attempts of other groups of thinkers similarly involved.

That these concerns were widespread is apparent from the rise of a variety of 'heterodox sects', among which Buddhism was included. These sects were not merely a reaction of Vedic religion, as is often suggested, because within the Vedic-Brahman framework there had also been a diversification of views as evidenced by the texts of the Upanisads and the Aranyakas. These were the discourses of the renouncers who had isolated themselves from society and lived in forest retreats. They stood apart, disenchanted with the world, seeking ultimate truths. Their discourses show a liberation of the speculative consciousness from the burdens of magical sacrifice and ritual. However, the universalistic basis of their thinking had some limitations. They recognized the need for individual salvation. In isolation and through *sannyasa* (asceticism), the individual could find his *moksa* (salvation) which would release his *atma* (individual soul) and enable it to unite with the *brahma* (all-soul). Asceticism was motivated both by a desire to escape from the insecurity of a changing society and by the conviction that meditation was an effective means of acquiring the knowledge that furthers self-realization as well as the power (*tapas*) to become superior even to the gods. Gradually asceticism came to be regarded as a more powerful force than sacrifice, thus admitting the ineffectiveness of a community attempt to reach moments of magic and power. Perhaps more important, asceticism resulted in total freedom, a break with family ties and social regulations, provided sexual needs could be sublimated. Hence the correlation between asceticism and asexuality. This freedom insured the renouncer a moral status far higher than that of even a sacrificing Brahman.

Some sects, such as the Ājīvikas, base their thought on determinism and saw renunciation as the only and ultimate path to *moksa*. The Buddhists and the Jains had both philosophical and social concerns. Access to knowledge did not lie through the authoritative voice of the Vedas, for what is not personally verifiable is unacceptable. Nor is scepticism a path to knowledge; the sceptics for the Buddhists were "eelwrigglers". Even asceticism was not possible as a path to salvation for everyone. Both the Buddha and Mahavira,

though seeking enlightenment through isolated meditation, nevertheless returned to the world of the cities and villages to preach the path of salvation to the householder who could not become a monk owing to his social obligations. In the case of the Buddha, the emphasis on 'the middle way', the path devoid of excesses, emphasizing moderation and a moral life, was indicative of his concern that the path suggested by him be compatible with the real problems of social existence. Not surprisingly, the early supporters of Buddhism were not only the ascetics but also, and in larger numbers, the *setthis* and members of the Kshatriya clans. At the other extreme were a number of *lokayata* sects, particularly the Carvakas, who were based primarily in the towns and who taught a thoroughgoing materialism, such as the teachings of Ajita Kesakambalin, the end-result of which was seen by others as an idealization of hedonism.

The thread of social protest winding through these heterodox teachings was indicative of a perception of change : of existing change, the recognition that further changes were imminent, and toward change itself. For the Buddhists, change was symbolized in two strands, which occasionally intertwined, the cosmic and the historical. The universe is transient and in a state of continuous flux. Buddhist cosmic time was cyclical, starting with a pristine utopian society, which had gradually decayed and was slowly reaching its nadir of sorrow and suffering, the direction in which contemporary society was moving. Eventually it would rise upwards again and begin a utopian phase. Brahminical sources, also positing cyclical time, attempted a mathematical measurement of it, albeit of an infinite magnitude, as did the Buddhists, who indicated infinite aeons by spatial descriptions.¹⁵ Time was seen as an unending continuity of which historical time was but a fraction. Within this continuity the individual consciousness also moved unceasingly from one lifetime to the next birth until liberated from the chain of rebirth. It is compared to the flame of a lamp used to light another lamp and so on, *ad infinitum*. In each case the flame of the lamp is both the old and the new flame, and so it is with the perception of change in the continuity of time.

Change, therefore, cannot be seen as a sudden break. But within historical time there is a far sharper awareness of the past and the future. Other 'enlightened ones' have trod the same path in the past as the Buddha. Was this allegorical, or was it a reference to earlier teachers with a similar doctrine? There is also the reference to the Buddha Maitreya, who will reawaken the world to the *Dharma* (the Law) many centuries after the present Buddha.¹⁶ This was to develop in the first centuries after Christ into an almost messianic movement within Buddhism, no doubt further stimulated by contact with the messianic message of Christianity and Manichaeism. The decline from utopian beginnings is not accidental. There is a concern with moral decay, which, although partially inherent (the very state of nature having evolved from luminosity to dross), is nevertheless caused by changes in the material content of

life. It can be circumvented to some extent by the individual's choice in the manner of adapting to changing social situations.

Central to the awareness of change is the law of causality, and it is around this that much of Buddhist doctrine revolves, claiming to derive from rational arguments and examples. At the individual level, the interconnection between desire, suffering, and rebirth is explained by causality. The elimination of *dukkha* (suffering) lies in the elimination of *tanha* (desire), and this can be achieved by observing the precepts of the *Dhamma*/*Dharma* (the law as taught by the Buddha) and the Eight-Fold Path. Social change is also explained by causality and becomes a part of the underpinning, as it were, of the universal applicability of the *Dharma*, for, once the causal connection is known, change comes under human control.

This led to a new perspective on the significance of the individual. The heterodox teaching, and Buddhism in particular, turned the earlier perspective inside out, and the focus shifted to the individual rather than the social group to which he belonged. Up to a point this encouraged a nihilistic trend, as in the case of the *Ājīvikas*. But nihilism was not characteristic of all sects. On this question the central core of the Buddhist *Dharma* is very clear. Where renunciation or opting out is not feasible, the individual, whatever his social status, had the choice of becoming a lay disciple and observing the rules of 'the middle way'. Furthermore, the moral responsibility of the individual was seen in the choice of action made by him through his chain of rebirth. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* described rebirth as consisting of *samsara*, the transmigration of souls, to which was added the notion of *Karma* (action), the outcome of the activities of one life affecting the next. The Buddhists modified the notion of *samsara* to exclude the soul and to refer to consciousness as the element that continues, and they appropriated the doctrine of *Karma* in its entirety. Thus not only was the individual responsible for the nature and condition of his present and future lives, but the doctrine of *Karma* also became a useful means of explaining the origin of social inequality and the creation of caste society.¹⁷ Not only was a man's social condition a reference point in social justice, but disease, physical pain, and even death were seen as aspects of social justice, although the moral responsibility for this condition rested with the individual. Thus the sting of social protest was numbed by insisting that there was no tangible agency responsible for social injustice, or even an abstract deity against whom man could complain, but that responsibility belonged with man himself. This in turn tended to curb nonconformity in behaviour for fear of the consequences in the next life.

It is not altogether fortuitous that Buddhism was popular among the entrepreneurs and the life-affirming groups in Indian society—the merchant and the artisan. Nor should it be forgotten that at the political level Buddhism registered its initial success in the period of the first empire, that of the Mauryas. The life-asserting aspect of *Karma* is that, if the rules are observed, the next birth can at least bring a better and more prosperous life, if not free-

dom from the chain of rebirth. There can be, therefore, considerable motivation for observing the rules. That the onus was on the individual is further emphasized by the necessity of being born a man, rather than any other creature, before salvation can be attained. Moral responsibility was not developed into a philosophy of radical change, which would have meant challenging the existing system. The Buddha made a distinction between caste as the frame of the socio-economic structure, which he accepted, and the notion of the relative purity inherent in the upper castes, which he rejected.¹⁸ The emphasis was on an individual's choice of an ethic, but the end-result of this had its social implications.

Fundamental to Buddhist teaching was the notion of the interplay of acts of merit (*punya*) and demerit (*papa*, literally evil, wickedness), and *punya* becomes central to ethical thought from this time onwards. The constituents of merit for the layman are activities motivated by the need to further social good, such as harmonious social relationships and charity, but, above all, sexual control and non-violence. Harmony in social relationships referred not only to those between parents and children, but also between master and slave, and employer and employee in general. This had a clear correlation with the large estates of the *Khattiyas* and the new urban culture. Although the Buddha associates the growth of evil in the world to (among other factors) the institutions of the family and private property, both of which, he argues, encouraged sentiments of possessiveness and consequently aggression, he nevertheless projects an undisturbed continuity for both institutions. In spite of its evils, the family did weaken the sense of alienation, and hence there is a stress on respecting kinship ties. Charity was seen not only as a means of alleviating the suffering of the materially poor, but also as the giving of gifts (*dana*) especially to the Sangha (the order of monks). This had the additional advantage of strengthening the monastic organization and its relations with the lay community.

Both sexual puritanism and non-violence became controversial issues in the debate among the various sects. The Buddha was not loathe to accept the devotion of the more renowned and accomplished courtesans of the towns, such as Amrapalli, but it took considerable persuasion for him to agree to admit women into the Sangha. Family ties were a major obstacle to renunciation, and women were symbolic of these ties. Yet during this time it was only in the Jain and Buddhist orders that nuns were permitted, and the women were drawn largely from urban society and the royal households.

Non-violence (*ahimsa*), the central focus of Buddhist and Jaina ethics, was less important in other religious sects. Veiled, ambiguous references can be culled from the Upanisads, but the exposition of the idea as an ethical value was that of Mahavira and the Buddha. The Jaina understanding of *ahimsa* appears to be an extreme position involving all created beings and the attempt to preserve them from destruction, whether deliberate or accidental.¹⁹ The

Buddhists tend to stress the ethical question of man's actions in furthering or preventing violence.

Ahimsa can be viewed in association with many facets of contemporary life. It has been seen as an objection to the sacrifice of animals during the *yajna*, the sacrificial ceremony essential to the Vedic Brahminical religion. There is repeated mention of the futility of killing animals as a religious ritual.²⁰ Possibly this coincided with the rapid transformation of pastoral groups into agriculturalists, which resulted in a depletion of animal wealth.²¹ The debate on the inviolability of the cow is referred to *en passant* in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, but it is again largely due to Buddhist and Jain disputation that the prohibition is extended from cattle to violence *per se*.²² *Ahimsa* can also be explained as a reaction among the new urban groups to the prestige economy of non-urban societies, who were willfully destroying wealth to no purpose. Sacrifice, it was argued, is essentially an offering; consequently it lies not in the destruction of life but in the embodiment of moral values that become the foundation for ethical behaviour—in honouring parents, in honouring all the members of the household from the highest to the lowest, in having patience, meekness, and selfcontrol. The values listed are both conservative and conciliatory. Yet the element of radicalism in this view is the inclusion of slaves and workmen as deserving of honour. At another level *ahimsa* would have suited those who were discouraging inter-tribal warfare and encouraging the expansion of settled agriculture and trade-activities from which both the *Khattiyas* and *setthis* stood to gain.

Ahimsa also included a discouragement of the use of coercion and violence to justify political authoritarianism—very pertinent to the transformation of the *janapadas* into kingdoms laying political claim to large territories. The suspicion of political authoritarianism may have to do with the fact that the heterodox sects often had their genesis in the relatively more egalitarian tradition of the oligarchies and republics, such as that of the Sakyas and Vrijjis. Those most directly affected by war would be the cultivators, whose fields were the prey of marauding armies, and the traders, who would be unable to transport their goods, or, even worse, whose centers of production would be destroyed in the devastation of a town—so often the symbolic final act of a successful campaign. Possibly *ahimsa* could also undermine the ritualized wars—the campaigns that were fought subsequent to the *asvamedha* sacrifice, when a king claiming sovereignty over a region would release a sacrificial horse and would then be duty bound to conquer all the lands over which the horse wandered. Implicit in *ahimsa* at the political level is an objection to even the legitimate use of coercion (*danda*) by the political authority of the state. The king in his role as protector should avoid coercion, modelling himself after the ideal universal monarch, the *cakravartin*, who is *adanda* not having to resort to coercion.²³

Ahimsa might have had an ameliorative influence in situations of tension, which were by no means rare. Ultimately there was also the ethical and phi-

losophical level. Conscious non-violence (not to be confused with cowardice) was expressive of the highest ethical stand. The credibility of non-violence can only stem from a belief in man's innate virtue. It has been argued that the Buddha's *ahimsa* represents the negative philosophy of pacifism. To the extent that the Buddha was not preaching rebellion, but rather a conciliatory ethic, as a solution to social ills, the negative aspect of pacifism can be justified. But if *ahimsa* arose from an awareness of varying levels of comprehension and reaction, then pacifism alone cannot be the complete explanation. As a method of social protest, the objection even to ritual sacrifice involving the destruction of life takes on an active and affirmative role, as is evident from the continuing debate on this subject up to recent times. It is perhaps also worth remembering that the Brahminical insistence on vegetarianism dates to the post-Buddhist period.

The significance of renunciation has its own role in the Buddhist moral position and relates to the moral and political authority of the renouncer. There has been a tendency to see renunciation as a purely life-denying process. This it may be if the renouncer moves away from society and lives in isolation, though, even here, the negative aspect to the isolation is rarely foremost. But if the renouncer, after a period of isolation, resumes a function in society, in spite of his having renounced his ties, his influence can become both powerful and positive. Moral and political authority are separated and the former becomes the censor of the latter. This separation can be crucial to the establishing of an independent intellectual tradition, (as was the case in the lifetime of the Buddha), provided that the independent relationship between the two is not eroded by the requirements of patronage. If the renouncer is also in sympathy with the aspirations of a community and if he comes from a social background not generally associated with life-denial and renunciation, but rather with political authority and social status (such as the *Khattiyas* of the time), his moral authority is almost unlimited. In such situations the renouncer forsakes one life-style to take on another.

Recruitment to the heterodox sects was not limited to any particular group. Those who had an organized body of adherents, enlisted monks, and built monasteries encouraged people of all castes to join the organization and, in theory at least, did not bar any caste. In the Buddhist Sangha the adoption of a new name by the monk was symbolic not merely of a new birth in the Sangha but also of a removal from his caste and status.²⁴ The proximity of all castes within the monasteries ran counter to the Brahminical ideal of the segregation of castes in daily living. Commensality among such monks from the lay community broke the food taboos so essential to the *varna* system. Outside the monastery and among lay followers the problem of integrating social groups remained.

Each *jati* had its own religious observances. Religious differentiations were preserved through the mechanism of caste, as were the observance of rituals pertaining to local cults, some of which were assimilated into Buddhist prac-

tice.²⁵ The Buddhist shift of emphasis from deities to the more abstract notion of *Dharma* (the Law) was an attempt in part to undermine these religious differentiations. It may be argued that the absence of a deity in Buddhism inherent in the doctrine strengthened the idea of a universal religion. In some ways, however, *Dharma* almost took on the characteristics of an omniscient presence symbolized in the turning of the Wheel of the Law. *Dharma* was the eternal Law—ultimate, timeless, temporal, transcendent, immanent. In spite of changing human society the Law remained changeless. It integrated within itself the ethic of the individual, the verification of ultimate knowledge, and the path of salvation. Change was perceived, recognized, and understood. But it was not the changed situation that was to be subjected to radical social alteration as much as the Law that was to be applicable in all situations. The Law was above the particular and was universally viable. Enlightenment lay in the discovery of this Law and identification with it. But the Law was not to be kept to oneself in isolation. The enlightened ones must return to the cities and the villages and preach the Law. There is the repeated parable of the raft, where he who has discovered the Law (the raft) must help others to cross the waters on it.²⁶

The arbiters of the *Dharma* were the elders of the monastery. The Buddhist monastery was both a retreat for meditation and an institution for action. The early monasteries had to be located close to large concentrations of population, because of the requirement that the monks live on alms, since they were forbidden to do any manual labour including cultivating their own food. Begging for alms and preaching the doctrine brought them into contact with the lay community. The Sangha was thus a collection of renouncers but not of ascetics. The monks took on a new way of life based on communal sharing and dedication to poverty, evidenced by the prohibition against personal possessions and by the name they adopted, *bhikṣu*, (mendicant). Central to the organization of the Sangha was the emphasis on the equal status of every monk, influenced perhaps by the more egalitarian political organization of the oligarchic *janapadas*, familiar to the Buddha. But this insistence on equality did not apply to the world outside. It was almost as if the creation of a radical, egalitarian society within the monastery exhausted the drive towards such a society in the world outside, or at least weakened the urgency of radical change—assuming, however, that this had been intended. Celibacy and the discouraging of manual labour for the monks point up the bipolarity between the monk and the householder where the latter qualifies himself in part by his ties to family and property.²⁷ The monk and the householder lived in worlds apart.

The Sangha gradually acquired a strong sense of mission. This is evident from the frequency of the councils determining the true doctrine and the splintering off of sects within the Sangha after the death of the Buddha, each claiming to represent the true doctrine. Even more significant was the system of maintaining records and historical accounts not only of the major events in

the history of Buddhism, but also of the more important sects within the Sangha that encouraged the polemics of Buddhist sectarian thought. The community of renouncers was not altogether unaware either of its political role or of its role in the new ethic that they were promulgating.

The sense of mission was encouraged by the literate monks. The monasteries developed into centres of learning. This was again a point of opposition to the Vedic Brahminical approach for which literacy was the preserve of the socially-determined few and which, in any case, laid greater stress on the oral tradition. As a part of the appeal to the wider audience, the Buddha preached not in Sanskrit but in *Ardhamagadhiaparakrit* of the middle Ganges plain. At the same time as Brahmanical culture was seeking an *Arya* identity and exclusivity, the Buddha was breaking away from it.

The extension of literacy was symbolic of much that the new ideologies stood for, the insufficiency of faith and ritual and the incorporation of reason and moral action in a manner that would have wide applicability to large numbers of people of diverse social origins. The new teachers arose as individuals and not through an institutional base. But the continuance of the new ideologies required the building of their own institutional base. The perception of change and the need to come to terms with it were not seen as synonymous with a radical ideology in favour of a total change. The Buddhists, for example, were more analytical than earlier thinkers in their views on man and society, but they did not feel it necessary to suggest a complete reorganization of the social structure. To that degree, Buddhism in its historical role touched the chords of social protest but went no further. This was perhaps because the groups for which it was projecting a new ideology ceased to be the protesters at a certain historical point and became the heirs. The element of social protest in Buddhism was therefore limited to providing the intellectual encouragement and justification for the formation of a new elite. It can be argued that in the historical context of those times even this was a radical position and it was not necessary to extend causation to its logical limits. The *lokyatas* who insisted on natural causation and opposed the doctrine of *Karma* were either subsumed into the new system or were left on the fringes as anarchists.

The historical mission of Buddhism took it far afield. The monasteries, irrespective of sectarian differences, acted as networks of acculturation and contact within the Indian subcontinent reaching out into the remotest corners, monks travelling either in isolation or accompanying the traders. In the first millennium AD the significance of the mission of Buddhism was that it acted as a catalyst in many parts of Asia. Its major orientation was in Central Asia, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. The period when Buddhism took root and prospered in these new areas coincided with its fading in the country of its origin. Can this be regarded as a historical demonstration of the Buddhist notion of change and continuity—the analogy with the flame of one lamp lighting the flame of another before being extinguished?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Archaeological evidence of the post-Harappan period, particularly in Gujarat, Malwa, the Banas Valley, and parts of the Watershed and upper Doab, points to some continuities of cultural traits from the Harappa culture. Small settlements of primitive agriculturalists in the Doab or the western Ganges plain (the Ochre-Colour Pottery culture) were superseded toward the end of the second millennium B.C. by larger settlements of more advanced agriculturalists gradually taking to iron technology by the earlier part of the first millennium B.C. (the Painted Gray-Ware culture). Further east, in the middle Ganges plain and south Bihar, the impetus for using an iron technology is associated with an apparently different group of people (the Black and Red-Ware culture), who appear to have had some links with western India via the northern part of the central Indian plateau. The Doab was the geographical focus of the later Vedic literature and was identified (in the main) in Brahminical literature with the *arya-varta* or the land of the *aryas* (the pure, respectable people), those who spoke Sanskrit and observed the caste laws. South Bihar, which included the territory of Magadha, was to a greater extent the geographical focus of "the heterodox sects". In the Buddhist and Jaina texts, south Bihar was the core of the *arya-varta*, since these texts tended to give a more easterly location to the "pure land". An area of high precipitation, the Ganges plain was at that time covered with forests. It has been argued that settlement on any appreciable scale would have been virtually impossible before the introduction of iron technology, the monsoon forest being relatively impervious to the tools of copper technology. That the introduction of iron coincided with an increase in population is clear even from fairly impressionistic archaeological data. The iron-age precondition to urbanization is evident from the number of settlements of iron-using cultures that developed into towns. Increase in population not only assisted in the clearing of more land for agriculture in the Ganges plain, but could also have acted as a lever toward encouraging a change to iron technology and more particularly to plough-use agriculture.
2. Patanjali, *Mahabhasya* on Panini IV.I. 168.
3. *Katyayana Srauta Sutra* XV.4.14; XV.2.11.
4. *Nanda Jataka* 1.98; *Gamani Canda Jataka* 1.207.
5. *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* 1.6.18.22; *Baudhayana Dharma Sutra* 1.5.93-94.
6. Maritime trade with west Asia was revived in the first millennium B.C. Close contacts were established between Iran and north western India. Within the sub-continent, overland and maritime routes to the south (Daksinapatha) were being explored.
7. Wagle, N., 1966, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.
8. *Manu Dharmasastra* VIII, 41.
9. *Rg Veda* VIII. 35.17; 86.10-11.
10. *Digha Nikaya* III.93.
11. *Mahabharata*, Santi Parvan 67.19-24.
12. The words used for two basic taxes were *bali*, originally meaning a tribute or booty eventually coming to mean a tax on land, and *bhaga*, meaning 'a share' and applied to the produce of the land, reflecting the more stable distribution of settled times. An early term for the king was *bhagadugha*, literally, 'he who milks the share'.
13. As suggested by the Buddha in *Digha Nikaya* III, p. 188 (P. T. S. ed.).
14. For a correlation of material conditions with the rise of Buddhism, R. S. Sharma, "Material Milieu of the Birth of Buddhism", paper presented to the Twenty-Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, Paris, 1973. The Proceedings of the Congress have not yet been published.
15. *Samyutta Nikaya*, 15.ii, 178-193.
16. *Digha Nikaya* III. 76.
17. *Majjhima Nikaya* I, 289; *Anguttara Nikaya* V. 288-291. This is made even more explicit in the pre-eminent text of Brahmanism, the *Bhagavad-Gita* IV. 13, composed in the period after the Buddha.
18. *Anguttara Nikaya* III. 214; *Samyutta Nikaya* 1.167; *Majjhima Nikaya* II. 128-30.
19. *Acaranga Sutra* II. 1.1-4.
20. *Anguttara Nikaya* IV. 42-45.
21. Kosambi, D.D., 1965, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, London, Routledge Kegan Paul, p. 105. Cattle provided both labour and fertilizer in agricultural societies, and any depletion was a serious loss. That cattle were singled out for protection is clear from the emphasis in some sections of the Buddhist texts, such as *Majjhima Nikaya*, 1.220.
22. The debate is perhaps best symbolized by passages in the early text, the *Satapatha Brahmana* III. 1-2.21 where the eating of meat (the flesh of the cow is the case in point)

is defended by Yajnavalkya, who represents an important point of view, and the later prohibition on it, as for example in the text of Manu dating to the first century B.C.

23. Cakkavti Sinhanadasutta, *Digha Nikaya* III, p. 58 (S.B.B. ed.).
24. *Vinaya Pitaka* II. 239; *Anguttara Nikaya* IV.202.
25. Dates for important events such as the *vassa* (the rainy season when the monks had to return to the monastery), the *uposatha* (the days for the hearing of the confession of the monks), etc. were calculated on the basis of the lunar calendar, although the solar calendar was also in use at the time.
26. *Majjhima Nikaya* I.134-5; *Samyutta Nikaya* IV. 179-181; *Anguttara Nikaya* II. 201.
27. Tambiah, S. J., 1970, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North East Thailand*, Cambridge, pp. 81 ff.

Devahuti

Asoka's Dissent from the Hindu and the Buddhist Goals and Methods of Chakravarti, the Great Conqueror

THE TERMS DISSENT, PROTEST AND REFORM APPARENTLY ARISING FROM A WESTERN frame of reference seem to acquire a new connotation when studied in the context of Indian civilization. In order to define them concretely, we have to inquire into their frequency, duration, and spread in terms of numbers and area ; for a qualitative assessment it is necessary to go into the motivations, the character they acquired, and the final form they resulted in. An analysis of a number of case studies roughly falling under these labels is more likely to give a correct appreciation of dissent, protest, and reform in Indian civilization than a definition of these terms and the search for Indian phenomena that would fit into these Western categories.

While most such phenomena would acquire the nature of *movements*, it is pertinent to discuss the imperial policy of a single king, Asoka, who dissented, in part, both from the Hindu and the Buddhist models. This policy created an impact on the Indian mind and indirectly on the Buddhist ethos of regions beyond India rather in the manner that Gandhi's experiment has done in the present times.

Let us first take into account an aspect of *rajadharma*, the role¹ of a king as conceived and carried out by Asoka, a unique ruler, in Indian or for that matter, in world history. This refers to Asoka's *dharma-vijaya*, righteous type of conquest, which represented a point of departure from the earlier definitions and implementations of this kingly programme of action. In the context of a king as imperious as Asoka, in spite of the humility expressed in his dharma messages, it seems almost impertinent to use the terms dissent, protest, and reform to indicate the gentle but radical change that he brought about in a concept and a policy so basic to the institution of kingship. The terms imply a degree of tension or pressure normally experienced by the non-conformist(s). In the case of Asoka, however, the fact of his kingliness expressed

through the royal edicts sustained the displeasure inherent in tension. Although the change apparently lasted only during Asoka's rule (269-233 B.C.)², the importance of this milestone in the Indian tradition (and consequently in the Indian ethos) of pragmatic idealism or in less august terms of making a virtue of necessity, cannot be minimized.³

We shall examine Asoka's policies with reference to the *chakravarti-kshetra* and *vijaya* concepts and practice as they prevailed before and around the age of the Mauryas.

Dissent, protest and reform do not, indeed cannot, imply a complete break with the situation at which they are directed. At least in the present case they signify:

1. (a) A highly selective reiteration of the Early Hindu⁴ concepts of *dharma*.⁵
 (b) A declaration of such of the Buddhist ones as would have been relatively easily acceptable on the whole to Asoka's people of mixed persuasions.⁶
2. A tacit acceptance of the Hindu (and Buddhist) *dharma-vijaya* in as much as the army was retained. It was, however, never used after the Kalinga war probably owing to practical difficulties in extracting and retaining formal allegiance from the extreme South but avowedly owing to Asoka's own interpretation of *dharma-vijaya*. Nevertheless, the deterrent value of an army was appreciated by Asoka.
3. A new dimension was added to the notion of *chakravarti-kshetra*, the area of political influence, often of varying shades of intensity. Thus, an innovation was made, firstly in the formal recognition of an entity within the body politic—the *anta* or the *pratyanta*, the bordering area or people,⁷ and secondly in the extension of *vijaya*, conquest, in its novel form, as the propagation of humane ideas, and their application in the field of social welfare through civil personnel.

Asoka, thus, deviated partly, from both the Hindu and the Buddhist ideals and practices. Although he wanted the new political infrastructure to become a model for the future kings of his race it only lasted his lifetime in the form in which he recommended it.

The king was expected to patronize all sects, and as a liberal-minded person and practical statesman that he was, Asoka expressed respect for all, and borrowed from all sects. His attitude towards religious coexistence is expressed in the following words:

'King Priyadarsi Devanampriya⁸, wishes that all [religious] sects should live [harmoniously] everywhere [in his dominions], for all of them want self-control and purity of thought⁹; 'There is no person who is not devoted to a particular religious sect'¹⁰; [The King] honours all sects...'; '...there should be no extolment of one's own sect or disparagement of other sects.... Other sects should be honoured in every way on all occasions'; 'whosoever extols his own sect and disparages other sects...injures his own sect greatly...'; 'This indeed is the desire of Devanampriya that [followers of] all sects

should be well-informed [about others] and acquire benevolent thoughts'¹¹; '...all the religious sects have been honoured by me with various kinds of honours'¹²; 'The *dharma-mahamatras* (i.e. the officers concerned with the propagation of *dharma*) are occupied with all the religious sects—The *Brahmanas*, and *Ajivikas*—*Nirgranthas*—with these and [with yet] other sects.¹³

Asoka's own commitment was to Buddhism: 'A little more than two years and a half have passed¹⁴ since I am avowedly a lay follower of the Buddha'¹⁵; 'It is known to you, Sirs, [how great is] my reverence for and faith in the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha* [The Buddhist creed].¹⁶ His authoritative address to the monks and the nuns regarding the maintenance of unity and order,¹⁷ his worship of the Buddhist stupa which he had earlier enlarged,¹⁸ his other *dharma-yatra(s)* to Lumbini¹⁹ and to Sambodhi [Bodh Gaya]²⁰ and his specially Buddhist definition of *dharma* in a few of his edicts all testify to his personal belief which he had the freedom to choose like anybody else in his dominions.

It is indeed remarkable that in the dozens of inscriptions of Asoka so far discovered, *dharma* is defined in the most neutral terms so as to be acceptable to the followers of all the sects within the realm. In accordance with *dharma* the following are described as the good acts: to obey mother and father, to be generous to friends, acquaintances, and relatives, and to Brahmanas and Sramanas, not to kill living beings, to possess little and to spend little.²¹ The list further includes proper consideration for slaves and servants, the poor*, the distressed*, and the aged*, reverence for teachers, and elders*, restraint with regard to living beings and once again generosity to Brahmanas and Sramanas.²² Truthfulness is added to these constituents of *dharma* in three inscriptions.²³ Of these, the Minor R.E. II repeats obedience to mother, father and elders, and kindness to living beings; P.E. II and VII both stress compassion, generosity and purity, and the latter also adds gentleness and goodness. P.E. II while making allowance for human failings, exhorts men to improve themselves: '*Dharma* consists of few bad deeds and many good deeds'.

The eclectic socio-religious climate of the early Maurya age is reflected in the changes in the religious propensities of the first three Maurya Emperors who after Hindu beginnings are said to have inclined respectively towards the Jaina, *Ajivika* and Buddha beliefs.²⁴ If the teachings of the prophets themselves represented both continuity and change, the policies of the emperors who were men of the world, are even more likely to have done so. Both with regard to general concept and particular detail Buddhist kings, actual or legendary, borrowed from early Hinduism.²⁵ In saying this one should not forget that the Hindu terms such as *dharma*, *deva*, *raja*, *chakravarti*, etc. connoted only so much and no more nor less in the third century B.C., and also that such terms *philologically* Hindu, sometimes acquired new and different meanings in Jainism and Buddhism. It was only natural that the existing language should

provide the bulk of terms to movements that sought to introduce changes in existing ideas and practices.

The *dharma-sutras* of Gautama, Apastamba, Baudhayana and Vasishtha all to be placed between c600-300 B C, the oral tradition of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata if we could get at it, and Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, the bulk of which is pre-Asokan would provide clues to the Hindu archetypes of Asoka. The early Buddhist tradition and literature making up the subject matter of the *Maha-vagga* and the *Chulla-vagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Digha*, *Majjhima*, *Sanyutta* and *Anguttara Niyakaas*, the *Sutta Nipata*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Theragatha* and the *Therigatha*, the *Vimana Vatthu* and the *Peta Vatthu* and the nucleus of the *Jataka* stories would contain examples of Asoka's Buddhist models of a king.

In Buddhist literature too may be detected the Hindu view of kingship sought to be modified radically by the teacher who had abandoned royalty to become a monk and who viewed kingship as a necessary but lesser occupation. Even if the Kshatriya was higher than the Brahmana, the Sramana was higher than the Kshatriya.²⁶

The Hindu ideal or model for Asoka is exemplified through the following extracts.

In Kautilya's,²⁷ the earliest extant *artha-sastra*, the Hindu *dharma-vijayain*, the righteous conqueror, is defined as one who is 'satisfied with submission', as against the *lokha*—and the *asura-vijayain*, the greedy, and the demoniac conquerors who covet the land and the goods, and in the case of the second type also the sons, wives and life of the vanquished. *Dharma-vijaya* is the recommended form of conquest. Conforming to this, are the three forms of strength of the king, of which *mantra*, deliberation is considered superior to *prabhava*, mastery, and to *utsaha*, vitality.²⁸ Hence too the importance of *sandhi*, peace or treaty, against *vigraha* war.²⁹

The *chakravarti-kshetra* is defined as the region 'between the *Himavat* and the sea, one thousand *yojanas* in extent across.'³⁰ The army in those times consisted of four wings: chariots, elephants, horses and infantry. It was with the might of his army, either made known to the lesser kings who were intended to be conquered, or displayed to such kings by marching through their territories that the righteous conqueror secured their allegiance. As an ideal overlord he did not in any way disturb the way of life of the conquered people. He also allowed the vassals to continue to rule, so to say, on his behalf. To win popularity he even tried to 'adopt a similar dress, language and behaviour [as those of the subjects] and [to]—show the same devotion—in honour of deities of the country.'³¹

The following tales or didactic compositions are illustrative of the Buddhist ideal or model for Asoka.³²

The *Maha-Sudassana-Suttanta* of the *Digha Nikaya* is a description of the mightiest and the most righteous king, for king Maha-Sudassana of Kusavati

(Kusinara) was the Buddha himself in an earlier life.³³ The entire milieu of the story is much simpler than would have existed in the time of Asoka.

Maha-Sudassana was an anointed Kshatriya, lord of the four quarters of the earth, conqueror, protector of his people, possessor of the seven royal treasurers, and of the four Siddhi(s), marvellous powers.³⁴ Among the ten pleasant sounds to be heard in his city one was the chorus, 'Eat, drink, and be merry.'³⁵

The first of the royal treasurers, the *Chakra* conquered the whole earth to its very ocean boundary. The elephant and the horse too carried the king all along the earth to its very ocean boundary.

The king's fourth marvellous attainment, his popularity, was an echo of his own love for the people. Once when king Maha-Sudassana was marching in procession the Brahmanas and the householders went up to him and said, 'O King, pass slowly by, that we may look upon thee for a longer time', upon which the king told his charioteer, 'Drive the chariot slowly,—that I may look upon the Brahmanas and the householders for a longer time'.

King Maha-Sudassana beautified his town with trees and lotus ponds and established perpetual grants of food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, clothes for the naked, means of conveyance for those who needed it, benches for the tired, wives for those who wanted wives, gold for the poor and money for those who were in want.³⁶

The source of his wealth was righteous taxation (*Sapateyyam dhammiken balina abhisankhatam*). He entertained with all good things those of the Sramanas and the Brahmanas who at that time were held in high esteem.

The time had now come for the king, so far a man of the world, to have the great spiritual experience. One day in his great *dharma-passada*, the palace of righteousness, Maha-Sudassana pondered over the cause of his great good fortune and realized that it was the result of *dana*, giving, *dama*, self-conquest, and *sanyama*, self-control. With intense religious emotion he entered the chamber of the *maha-viyuham*, the great complex, and renounced the thoughts of lust, ill-will, and hatred. Thus he entered the state of the *First Samadhi*. Then through gradual stages he entered the final *Fourth Samadhi*—a state of purified self-possession and equanimity, without ease and without pain. His mind was pervaded with thoughts of *metta*, love, *karuna*, compassion, *mudita*, joy and *upekkha*, equanimity, for the whole wide world.

After a very very long time in the presence of his queen, Subhadda and the other ladies of the women's quarters, the great king Maha-Sudassana died. Before death he had realized that it is in the nature of things to be separated from all things near and dear and that one should cast away desire for them and for life, in preparation for death. After the dissolution of the body the great king Maha-Sudassana entered the world of Brahma (*Sugatim Brahma-lokam upapajji*).

In the *Ambattha Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* a great king is described thus—'a universal, righteous king, (*chakkavatti dhammiko dhammaraja*) bearing rule even to the shores of the four great oceans, a conqueror, protector of his people,

possessor of the seven royal treasures... And he has more than a thousand sons—heroes, mighty in frame, beating down the armies of the foe (*para-senappamaddana*). And he dwells in complete ascendancy over the wide earth from sea to sea, ruling it in righteousness (*dhammena*) without the need of baton or sword (*adandena asatthena*).³⁷

In the *Dalhanemi Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya*³⁸ the *Chakkavati Dalhanemi* accompanied by the *Chakra* and his fourfold army appeared in each of the four quarters and the rival kings offered him their submission. He allowed them to retain their possessions on condition that they observe the five moral precepts meant for the lay Buddhist.³⁹

The *Bala-pandita-sutta* in the Final Fifty Discourses of the *Majjhima Alikaya* also contains the account of a *chakravarti*, king, who conquered the earth with his fourfold army but expected of his vassals only adherence to the precepts of *dharma*.

The *Anguttra Nikaya* poses the question: *Ko pana...ranno chakkavattissa dhammikassa dhammaranno raja* (who is the king of the great conqueror, the righteous king), and provides the answer—*dhamma*⁴⁰ endowed with five possessions, one of which is a strong fourfold army. Such a *chakravarti dharmika dhammaraja* honours, esteems and reveres *dharma*, with *dharma* as the standard he provides righteous safety, cover and protection for his people, for Kshatriyas, and the army, for Brahmana and householder, for town and country people, for Sramanas and Brahmanas, for birds and beasts. 'By righteousness he sets the wheel in motion of which the course cannot be resisted by any hostile king whatsoever.'⁴¹

The *Jatakas* place these virtues in colourful settings,⁴² of which the ethical contents are: the righteous king should follow the tenfold *raja-dharma*, namely, alms-giving, morality, liberality, straightforwardness, and forbearance, and refrain from anger, from injury, and from opposition. He should avoid the four *agati-gamana*: excitement, malice, delusion, and fear. He should win over his people by the four *samgaha-vatthu*: liberality, affability, beneficent rule, and impartiality. The good king should observe the ten *sila*.⁴³ He should also observe the *dasa dharma* towards mother and father, wife and son, relatives and ministers, draught animals, the realm, Sramanas and Brahmanas, birds and beasts.⁴⁴

The king who pitted virtue against vice was considered superior to the one who was good to the good and bad against the bad.⁴⁵

Of the greatest significance is the fact that the 'treasures' of a *chakravarti* father signifying his powers born of righteousness are not regarded as *pettikam dāyajjam*, paternal heritage for his son and successor. When *Dalhanemi* retired to the hermitage and was succeeded by his son, the celestial *chakra* disappeared from view. The new king was then advised by the sage: 'Thou should provide right watch, ward, and protection for thy own folk, for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for Brahmanas and householders, for town and country, for Sramanas and Brahmanas, and for beasts and birds: throughout thy kingdom,

let no wrong-doing prevail: and whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given; should Sramanas and Brahmanas ask thee for the proper line of action, thou should deter them from evil and bid them take up what is good.' When the king followed this advice the *chakra* reappeared. A later king of the line followed the duties of a *chakravarti* only to a limited extent: he provided protection but not *dana*, thereupon poverty increased, peoples morals declined and their lifespan became shorter. Finally the people took it upon themselves to increase their store of good deeds and improved the situation.

Unlike Hinduism, Buddhism views *dharma* and *artha* as contra-purposive. According to it there is *khattavijjā*, the low arts, and *michchhājīva*, wrongful occupations. With the kingly ideal of the *dharmika dharmaraja* to inspire him the *chakravarti* was expected to make special efforts to apply the Buddhist ethical code⁴⁶ at a collective level so that a true welfare state may emerge.

In his personal conduct too, the king was exhorted to adopt Buddhist virtues generally meant for the lay follower to which were added those specifically suited to the ruler. In his role as a conqueror, however, the king was expected to subdue 'the whole earth' with a display of armed strength. The idea of beating down the armies of the enemies (*para-sena-ppamaddana*) does exist even if the king was to rule the kingdom righteously without the need for rod or weapon (*dhammena, adandena, asatthena*).

Asoka dissented from both Hinduism and Buddhism in his definitions, firstly, of the extent of the *chakravarti-kshetra* and secondly, in the method of conquest. He even dissented in his interpretation of *dhamma* activities to be promoted by the king.

Four of Asoka's edicts, R. E. XIII (Shahbazgarhi text), the second separate Edict (Jaugada version), the Rock Edict II (Girnar text) and the Minor Rock Edict I (Gujara text) may be cited in support of the first two contentions. With regard to the lattermost, not of primary importance for the purposes of this paper, it may briefly be said that Asoka was more puritanical in his approach to the kings or the peoples' forms of relaxation than were the early Buddhist texts.⁴⁷

Able, powerful and ambitious, Asoka conquered Kalinga at the outset of his career as a king, when he was still under forty. Spiritually too Asoka appears to have been at the crossroads at this period of his life. He states that the feat brought him deep remorse on account of the extensive violence caused by war. According to Minor Rock Edict I he was not a fervent believer in the first year of his avowed adherence to Buddhism as a lay follower, which presumably occurred not long after the Kalinga episode.

The thoughts appear to have occurred in the mind of this vigorous king that if a conqueror abjures violence and further conquest by arms does he also give up conquest? For Asoka the usual channels into which a king directed his energies were metamorphosed into those of *dharma*. He thus found a

rationalization for his spiritual aggressiveness (the term being applicable here in the psychological sense).

The second separate Rock Edict found at Dhauili and Jaugada in Kalinga is crucial in revealing the development of Asoka's thoughts along these lines. The edict was issued to his officers obviously by an imperious king:

'Whatever I deem fit, I wish to carry out by action and to realize it by [effective] means. I consider these to be the principal means and I instruct you accordingly.

'All men are my children⁴⁸...I desire...[their] welfare and happiness in this world and in the next...

'The unconquered peoples on my borders may ask: What is the king's desire in respect of us?...the king desires that they should have confidence in him,...they should expect from him only happiness and no misery. They should also realize that the king will forgive them as far as they can be forgiven (*Khamisati ne laja e sakiye khamitave*) (Skt. *Khamishyate*—yet *shakyam kshantum*). They should practice *dharma* and gain this world and the next.

'—Thus I may discharge my debt to them...by having known to you this my firm resolution and vow.

'Acting thus, they shall be reassured and realize that the king is like a father.

'The *Mahamatras* should reassure the borderers and induce them to practice *dharma*.⁴⁹

Rock Edict XIII declares:

'Devanampriya considers *dharma-vijaya* to be the foremost victory. And Devanampriya has achieved this victory in all the bordering territories to a distance of 600 yojanas (approximately 1500 miles) (*Saveshu cha anteshu a shashu* etc.), where the Yavana (Greek) king Antiyoka (Antiochus) is ruling and where, beyond the kingdom of the said Antiyoka, four other kings Turamaya (Ptolemy), Antikini (Antigonos), Maka (Magas), and Alikasundara (Alexander) are, and in the south over the Cholas and Pandyas as far as Tamraparni. Likewise here in the imperial domains (*raja vishavaspi*) among the Yavanas and the Kambojas (etc.) everywhere people are conforming to *dharma*. Even where the envoys (*dutah*) of Devanampriya have not gone, there too people have heard of [his] *dharma* promulgations and instructions and they follow *dharma* and will continue to follow it. What is achieved by this is victory everywhere (*savatra vijaya*) and victory everywhere (or everywhere victory i.e. this victory to all concerned) is pleasant (*Pritiraso*).... My sons and grandsons should not think of new conquests as [anything] worth achieving and whatever victories they may gain it may please them to have forbearance and inflict mild punishment. They should regard conquest by *dharma*, as true conquest...'

The text implies that Asoka's envoys had gone to all the bordering territories which he considered the *chakravarti-kshetra* for *dharma-vijaya*, and that

he considered the Yavana borderers as belonging to the same category as the Cholas and the Pandyas.⁵⁰

This inscription also differentiates between the bordering territories and those beyond them and implies that the *anta(s)* were an integral part of the Asokan body politic for the execution of the emperor's *dharma-vijaya* or righteous conquest.⁵¹

Minor Rock Edict I (Gujara text) states, 'Let the bordering people [*antah*] know that the practice of *dharma* is lasting' and Rock Edict II (Girnar text) reiterates that like the Cholas and the Pandyas, the Satiyaputa, the Kerala-puta, and Tamraparni, the territories of the Yavana king Antiyoka and of his Yavana neighbours were patronized by Asoka in as much as he instituted measures for the medical treatment of both men and animals as a part of his *dharma-vijaya*.

Indian ethos is a positive one; mostly it accepts, sometimes it rejects. Moreover, it stubbornly sets high ideals yet recognizes, as a matter of course, the vagaries of human nature. It is comfortable in metamorphosis, or in synthesis or in coexistence turning dissent, reform or protest (which are mostly deviant from rather than the antithesis of the existing order) into any of these or their combinations. In accordance with such an ethos occurred Asoka who accepted something from each of the older traditions not only because of the historical inevitability of such a process but because the Indian ethos dictated a willing and active acceptance. Moreover, he provided for the hard facts of politics, yet stubbornly idealized them turning them in the process into a bit of reality. Without doubt he had dissented and legitimized his dissent. The future generations of kings, and of political and social thinkers, having imbibed something of the tradition created by Asoka, reacted in their own manner to the realities of the times.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A more comprehensive and accurate term than 'duty' by which it is commonly denoted.
2. Asoka's experiment began around 260 BC.
3. The footnotes contain references to its echo in Hindu epigraphic and literary records of near contemporary and later times.
4. A not entirely satisfactory term, it is perhaps more accurate than Brahmanism as the Varna system at that time was more fluid than in later times. Consequently early Hindu thought was not produced only by Brahmanas. To a lesser extent it is true of Classic and later Hinduism too.
(For a list of non-Kshatriya kings and the acceptance of this principle by a long line of law-givers one may consult *Sabara* (AD 200-500, commentator on Jainini (500-200 BC)., *Medhatithi* (AD 900) on *Manu* (200 BC to AD 100), *Aparaka* (AD 1125) on *Tajnavalkya* (AD 100-300), *Vaijayanti* (AD 1590-1630) on *Vishnu Dharma-Sutra* (AD 100-300) etc.
5. Thus, the elephant-trainers, scribes, charioteers and Brahmins were issued the following order :
'You should instruct your pupils in accordance with what is ancient usage (*Paurani Prakritih*)'—Minor Rock Edict II, Yerragudi text. 'The pupil should honour his teacher...This is an ancient rule and the principle is of long standing'. Same, Brahmagiri text.

6. Our reservations arise, in part from the *ahimsa* promulgations which would have affected the means of livelihood and the dietary habits of the people, causing special hardship to the coastal inhabitants. See the Kandahar Rock Inscription, (Greek and Aramaic Versions), Pillar Edicts II and V, etc.
7. cf. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* XII. 3.16; XII. 4.20; *Mahavagga* V-xiii-26, etc.
8. The Prakrit spellings vary in different records hence we give the Sanskrit rendering.
9. R. E. VII (Shahbazgarhi text).
10. R. E. Edict XIII (S).
11. R. E. XII (S). It is significant that three important records with this import come from Shahbazgarhi, a frontier town close to the domains of the Yavanas which Asoka realized (R. E. XIII Kalsi text) followed different persuasions.
12. P. E. XI (Rampurva text).
13. P. E. VII (Topra Pillar in Delhi).
14. This record was probably engraved in c. 257 BC. Asoka's consecration took place in c. 269 BC. and his death which ended his reign, in c. 232 BC.
15. Minor R. E. I (Rupnath text). Asoka had this record inscribed at the greatest number of places; in central India at Bairat, Gujarrā Sahasram, and in southern India at Maski, Gavimath, Rajula-Mandagiri, Palkigundu, Yerragudi, Siddapura, Brahmagiri, and Jatinga Rameshvara.
16. Minor Stone-slab Edict from Bairat near Bhabru, Rajasthan.
17. Schism Edict (Allahabad-Kosam, Sanchi and Sarnath).
18. Nigali-Sager Pillar Inscription, Nepal.
19. Rummindei Pillar Inscription, Nepal.
20. Minor Rock Edict VIII.
21. R. E. II (Girnar text) R. E. IV (Girnar text) repeats them. cf. Kaut. II, 1: *Gautama* X 9-12, XVIII 31, *Anusasana* 61.28-30; *Santi* 165. 6-7. All those works state that the king as the extension of his duty to protect should support students, learned Brahmanas and sacrificers. Also see *Santi* 86.24. *Kripananaha vriddhanam vidhavanam cha yoshitam. Yoga kshmam cha vrittim cha nityameva prakalpayet and Sabha* 5.124 *Kachchidandhanshcha mukanshcha pangun vyangana bandhavan. piteva pasi dharmajna tatha pravrajitanapi.*
22. R. E. IX (Manshera text) I. R. E. VI repeats them. The words marked with asterisks are virtues mentioned in P. E. VII. In a *Jataka* tale the king is advised not to put to labour old men and aged domestic animals, for when they were strong they gave him service.
23. Minor Rock Edict II (Brahmagiri and Yerragudi text). Pillar Edicts II (Delhi-Topra) and VII (Topra Pillar now in Delhi).
24. Chandragupta in the latter part of his life, Bindusara probably when he had time from his campaigns, and Asoka avowedly, in his early forties, but probably earlier when during his Viceroyalty at Ujjain he met Devi, the beautiful, Buddhist daughter of a local merchant. Mahendra and Sanghamitra were Asoka's children by Devi.
25. *Kuru-dharma* as the symbol of good rule had become legendary and was held as an example by the Buddhists. The acceptance of the thirty two bodily signs of a great man and the seven treasures of a king are other similar instances.
26. *Khattiyo settho janetasmin ye gotta patisārīna Vijjā-charana sampanno so settho devamanuse ti. Digha Nikāya, Ambattha Sutta* 6.24. (The Kshatriya is the best of those among this folk who trace their gotras. But he who is perfect in wisdom and righteousness he is the best among gods and men.)
27. *Kaut. Artha*. XII.1. 10-16.
28. Op. cit. IX.1-16. cf. Mbh. *Asrama-vasika*, 7.6 and Gautama Dh. Sutra quoted in the *Sārasvati-vilas* p. 46: *Ata eva Gautama-sūtram Prabhumantrotsāha shaktyastanmūlāh iti. tanmūlāh kosamula ityarthah.*
29. Op. cit. VII.2.1-2.
30. Op. cit. IX. 1.18. This *desah* is synonymous with *prithvi*. The yojana was just over 2.5 miles. The best trained army covered two yojanas a day (x.2.12).
31. Op. cit. XIII. 5.
32. We have searched through Buddhist literature relatively more closely than through Hindu literature as the former is explored and made familiar to students of Indian history to a lesser degree than the latter.
33. A *Tathagata* and a *Chakravarti* are often placed at par. One is the world teacher, the other the world-ruler. Both bear the thirty two signs of a great man. The four whose remains deserve to be interred in a stupa are thus listed. *Tathagato araham sammāsa sambuddho, pacchekeka sambuddho, tathagatassa sarako, raja chak'evatti.* (A *Tathagata*, an Able Awakened One. One awakened for himself alone, a true Hearer of the *Tathagata* and a King of Kings). *Dighanikāya Parinibbana Sutta, Thuparaha puggala* section 3.23.29.

34. The treasurers were the *chakra* or the wheel representing the sun-later *dharma*, the elephant, the horse, the jewel, the beautiful and the faithful woman, the treasurer and the adviser. The marvellous attainments were : very handsome looks, graceful bearing, a very long life, excellent health, and popularity both with the Brahmanas and the householders. According to the *Anguttara Nikaya* III, 147-8, the *Chakravarti* King as well as his eldest son possess five qualities : they know wealth (Comy. *hetu*), *dhamma*, measure (Comy.), in punishments and impositions), time (Comy. for pleasure court work, and touring the country) and assembled men (Comy. whether they be nobles, Brahmanas, etc.).
35. "Asnatha, Pivatha, Khadatha."
36. In a *Jataka* tale the king is advised to distribute every morning and evening, by public proclamation, food and drink, garlands and unguents, clothes, umbrellas and shoes to the needy.
37. The description uttered by *Ambattha*, a Brahman's pupil is that of a great man, the possessor of the thirty two bodily signs, in his role as a king. The notion was acceptable to the Buddhists and by implication this description too would be acceptable to them.
38. III. 62.
39. Do not kill, do not take that which has not been given, do not act wrongly in pursuit of bodily desires, do not lie, do not drink intoxicating drinks.
40. III. 149.
41. The title *dhamma-maharajadhiraja* was used by Hindu kings as well. *Siva-skanda-varman* of Kanchi who had performed the *Agnishtoma*, *Vajapeya*, and *Asvamedha yajnas* adopted this title.
42. I p. 260-2, II p. 118, III pp. 325 and 70; V p. 1 and p. 378; VI pp. 96-7.
43. They refrained from heretical views, malevolence, frivolous talk, harsh speech slander, covetousness, adultery, lies, killing and taking of what is not given.
44. *Jataka* tale 501.
45. *Jataka* tales 51, 151 and 282.
46. Buddhism gave a particularly prominent place to ethics, and specially to certain virtues.
47. One of the ten pleasant sounds that reverberated in the kingdom of the righteous king *Maha-Sudassana*, one was "Eat, drink and be merry". The same king is shown going to the pleasure ground (*uyyāṇa-bhūmi*) with all the four wings of his army. *Digha Nikaya*, *Maha Sudassana Sutta*. Also see *Ghulla-vagga* VII, 1.2. Asoka's views on forms of amusement were very different.
48. cf. "The king should be like a father to his subjects and servants." Santi 139. 104-5.
49. cf. Bhishma 21.10. *Na tatha bala vīryābhyām jayanti vijigīṣavaḥ, yathā satyā nrishansyabhyam dharmenaivodyamena cha*. "Conquerors do not secure such victories by armies and prowess as they do by truthfulness, freedom from cruelty, the observance of *dharma* and energetic actions."
50. In the case of southern India, the Mauryas intervened, directly or indirectly in its politics with their military force as well. This fact is attested by Sangam literature.
51. cf. The use of *pratyanta* in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta.

Discussion

on Paper by Devahuti

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Would you say that Asoka's policy was spiritually exclusive? This is suggested by his edicts. Could you elaborate on this?

DEVAHUTI/ Asoka was ambitious, young and powerful, and yet he was torn between two alternatives—whether he should add to his empire, or listen to whatever his conscience said during and after the Kalinga war. It is not spiritual exclusiveness which is shown by his edicts, and these edicts are slightly different from the later Indian ones. Perhaps, you were referring to the style of the edicts. When I used the term spiritual exclusiveness I was thinking about that approach to the spread of Buddhist *dharma*, which calls it a 'conquest'. But even if the styles of inscriptions were quite different, and were imperialist in nature, I would still use the word spiritual exclusiveness. For instance, Asoka says, 'all the kings should be energetic. We should all be energetic... the officers should be energetic People should be energetic in the exercise of their duties.' This occurs in the Buddhist text again and again; and it also occurs in Kautilya's text which is a Hindu one. Thus, this term was quite prevalent in those times. But in the case of Asoka it is something additional—exceptional—which comes from the person himself, and not from any Hindu or Buddhist texts.

When I refer to Buddhism as Asoka's *dharma* it is true that he did not believe at all in the form of orthodox *dharma* of those times, because there are so many evidences to show that Asoka was the follower of Buddhism. At least in four inscriptions he actually says that he was the follower of Buddhism, and he is addressing himself to the monks and nuns of Buddhism. Therefore, while there is no denying the fact that he was a Buddhist, following Buddhism, yet whenever he talks about *dharma*, he never says that this is Buddhist ethic, or this is Hindu ethic. But he speaks of a general ethic, such as 'show respect to your mother and father.... Do not lie.... Do not steal.... Show respect to your teachers.' He also says that he respects both Brahmanas as well as Sramanas of all kinds.

T R SHARMA/ Secularism has been seen by many in Asoka's regime. Is this true?

DEVAHUTI/ I do know why people should call Asoka's *dharma* secular, since the quest of *dharma* is a very comprehensive term in the ancient period. I have tried to translate *dharma* not as 'kings' duty' but the actual *dharma* of the kings. Or, in any other situation I could have said, the nature of plants is to be plants—it is their nature or their *dharma* and so forth. So it is in that very connotation of the word which has to be seen. Thus, I do not see why people should try to read secularism in his particular *dharma*.

M S A RAO/ Devahuti's paper may be related to what was said in Pratap Chandra's paper. There seems to be a reference point which does indicate that Asoka was deviating. This is contrary to what Pratap Chandra had said about the plural situation.

The second issue is in the conclusion of Devahuti, where she claims that Asoka deviated both from Hindu *dharma* and Buddhist *dharma*. But this only shows that her views are themselves probably the judgement from the *Brahmana* or *Sramana* viewpoint. What should be borne in mind is that the emperor's ethic are different, because of the exigencies of ruling various types of people in his kingdom. This has to be done in order to build up an empire. Therefore, the *Chakravarti Kshetra* will be quite different from the point of view of religion, or *dharma*.

DEVAHUTI/ While I agree about the political exigencies, the deviations were not from the *Brahmana* and the *Sramana* viewpoint. My reference was to the *Arthashastra*. Perhaps, it would be better to say Asoka's contribution was to *Chakravarti Kshetra* and to the *Dharma Kshetra*, rather than as a dissent from these norms.

S R MEHROTRA/ First, in considering inscriptions and other epigraphic evidence we must bear in mind whether all these were true to reality, or were they injunctions of kings or proclamations. The second point is that we are trying to seek traditions of dissent and protest. So does the idea of Asoka fit into the tradition, or was he a lone protestor?

J S GREWAL/ In this context if we talk about the Mughal Emperors, their firmans and orders were written by other people but were carefully scrutinized by the emperors.

DEVAHUTI/ Of course, there is a bit of rhetoric in Asoka's inscriptions. But Asoka is one of the most particular in stating things exactly as far as it is possible. Various examples of this can be cited. Later on the use of rhetoric is much more, but even then it can clearly be distinguished from the actual.

Regarding the second point of the tradition, it has been mentioned that he was a lone king who was giving some new ideas but he cannot be excluded for this reason. If this is so then we may have to exclude Mahatma Gandhi on the same basis of being exceptional.

S C Misra

Dissent & Reform in medieval India : A Case Study of the Ismaili Nizari Mission in Gujarat

ACCORDING TO LEGENDS, THE FIRST NIZARI MISSIONARY, NUR SATGUR CAME TO Gujarat in the reign of Siddharaj Jayasingh (AD 1094-1143); almost about the same time as the foundation of Alamut and the establishment of the Da'wat at Dailam with Hasani Sabah as the first da'i (483/1090—518/1124). The initial missionary effort however was confined to Sind, where the half legendary Pir Shams seems to have worked miracles. But the more historical figure is that of Pir Sadr-u'd-din, reportedly sent by Islam Shah, the 30th Imam. Both he and his son, Kabir-u'd-din worked in Sind. It is his son, Imam-u'd-din, popularly known as Saiyyid Imam Shah, who was the first major Ismaili preacher in Gujarat, i.e. if we ignore the legendary figure of Nur Satgur. The dates for him are, as given in the traditionalist *Tawarikh-i-Pir*; birth, Rabi II. 27, 856/May 17, 1452; reached Gujarat Bhadarwa Sudi 11, 1508/September 6, 1451 (?); begun the Satpanthi mission, 878/1473-74 and 1510/1453; married 859-60/1455-60; established his seat at Pirana, 1524/1466-67; and died, Ramzan 26, 919/December 5, 1513.

On the basis of the no less legendary, Manzail u'l aqtab, Ivanow gives the dates as; birth 856/1452 and death as Ramzan 27, 919/December 6, 1513. In Ivanow's view, it was not with him but with his son Pir Nur Muhammad that the break in the Ismaili order came, when his group severed its ties with Sind and the Imam. The lines of communication between the Imam in *Satr* and his deputies in India also seems to have grown tenuous. As such, there was a set-back. In the middle of the 16th century, the Imam is supposed to have despatched Pir Daud commonly known as Dadu, who was active in Saurashtra. Following him and his son Sadiq, the Imam bestowed a book of high maxims, *Pir Pandyat-i-Jawanmardi* which was to take the place of the Pir.

It will be noted that the mission in India really got under way with Pir Sadr-u'd-din or to use the name he took in Sind, Sahadeva. This was subsequent to the stormy history of the Ismaili state and its highly imaginative

and revolutionary formulations—particularly the *Qiyama* theory of Hasan II 'ala zikrihi'l salam (557/1162—561/1166) and its affirmation by his son Muhammad II (561/1161—607/1210). Muhammad not only formulated the doctrine but sublimated the figure of the Imam to a new height. It was a new exaltation; the doctrine implied that 'the perfected faithful should no longer see anything but the Imam and the God in Imam.' It rendered the non-Ismaili world almost irrelevant—'It was as if Dailam and Kuhistan had been wrapt up like Elijah himself and carried out of sight of Sunnis, and their inhabitants were privileged to walk, as on everyday ground, upon sacred soil Moses removed his shoes to tread, when in the incident of the burning bush, God spoke to him through Melchisedec, the Imam qaim of the time.'

To say the least, this was a major innovation, in Sunni orthodoxy, and in Ithna-Ashari terms, a cardinal heresy. The day of *Qiyama*, Ramzan 17, 559/August 9, 1164, the day on which *taqiyya* was rendered unnecessary and the Shari'a superseded, was seen as the end of one and the beginning of another era. That it was the consummation of an age, the logical culmination of a theology is, of course, clear; what is also apparent is that the emergence of the power-state of Alamut served as a pre-requisite. But the transience of the euphoria showed that the base itself was limited and shaky. Still, its impact on the subsequent formulation of the Nizari theology was significant.

Possibly, it was with this background that these missionaries felt free to present their faith in an Indian guise, which considered in doctrinaire terms was startling. It is not possible in brief to give the rich texture of this formulation. Islam in the *Nizari-Ismaili* form was termed as Satpanth or the True Path. Hindu mythology especially the popular Bhagwat was incorporated and the ten *avatars* accepted. The Trinity was retained and *Ismaili* figures named as their latest *avatars*. The argument was that, the Satpanth was the form in which the traditional faith had been rendered to suit the last age, the age of sin, *kaliyuga*. It had therefore superseded the earlier versions, valid for earlier epochs. And for this age, the last *Veda*—*Atharva veda*—was valid, and the gospel being given was from this *Veda*. The *avatar* for this age, the promised *Tenth avatar* in popular Hindu mythology, was Ali. He and his creed were the only valid ones for the present, i.e. it was the Satpanth. The Hindu Shari'a too had yielded place to the new, the one which had been foretold.

Thus, the new faith left much of the basic socio-structural organization untouched. The rich paraphernalia of the traditionalist faith was retained; so was the legal system and kinship. The converts were not allowed to feel that they had undergone a conversion; they were convinced that they had accepted a revitalized, genuine form of the traditional faith. The sense of break, implicit in other forms of Islam was done away with, as the earlier belief was not rejected but reformed. This formulation, as Hollister feels, (and this is by and large the common opinion), represents 'the concessions made to a non-Islamic faith to win followers'. But this does not seem likely, except if it is seen superficially when subterfuges like this were employed to win what came to

be called 'rice-converts'. Yet, subterfuges insincerely adopted and grudgingly sanctioned do not become integral parts of a system. The reverence to *Dasavatar*, the *ginans* and their spirit bespeak a different mood.

In fact, the various formulations are the offshoots of the Nizari theosophy of the *Qiyama* in which Islam of the Nizaris was as far from the orthodoxies of the Sunni or Shi'a variety as probably one religion can be from another. The spirit of devotion to the Imam and his extraordinary position came close to the Hindu devotional faiths like Vaishnavism, Saivism or even Shakta. It may not thus have been a conscious subterfuge that incorporated the Hindu imagery; it was more likely to have been a genuine conviction that the Imam could be the legitimate saviour in one guise as he was in the other.

The impact of the missionaries was felt most by the clean cultivating castes and also by a few pastoral ones. Foremost in Sind, and then in Kacchh and Saurashtra, the Lohanas—at that time a cultivating community—were among those first affected,—long before the impact in Gujarat. It was with Imam-u'd-din that the mainland was touched and the kunbi cultivators of north and central Gujarat were converted. By the beginning of the 16th century, consequent upon the passing away of Imam Shah, active proslyetization virtually came to an end. The line of communication with the revitalizing headquarters was also rendered tenuous, and even the despatch of *dassondh* seems to have become fitful. It is at this juncture that the link between the Imam and his Pir in Gujarat, snapped. For many of the simple followers, the Pir was the living symbol of divinity. But Imam Shah's successors treated these *murids* as property, to be divided amongst themselves.

Thus came into being a nominally Islamized peasant population divided among several Saiyyid lineages descended from Imam Shah, and located in Navasari, Dholka, Pirana and several other centres. Their followers were the Momnas, the Sheikhdas and the Molesalams. So little was the impact of Islam upon them that a few reverted back to Hinduism during the Shuddhi movement, and even as late as in 1953. Certainly, they treated their Pirs with reverence but retained their caste system, their mores and their customs. Nevertheless, despite this marginality these people had some Muslim orientation. Imam Shah, in addition to the above, acquired a distinctly Hindu following from the kunbi cultivators who lived in pockets in north Gujarat, Saurashtra, Kacchh and the Tapti valley. They accepted Imam Shah and his line as their Pirs, paid their accustomed *dassondh*. In this way they broke away from the brahman priests, abandoned the pilgrimage centres and discarded the sacred threads.

However, they retained the caste-status, endogamy, and continued to follow other traditional customs, and burning their dead, albeit the more affluent preferring to bury the ashes in the precincts of the Pir's mausoleum at Pirana. The level of pollution consciousness was high: for example, ritual purification was required not only of a woman after menstruation or childbirth but also that of a cow or buffalo after calving. Secession from the main-

stream also gave them a strong sense of in-group solidarity, strengthened by the pivotal role of the *mukhi* or headman who officiated on all occasions, instead of a brahman as elsewhere. Finally, they evolved a system by which their fellows, ordained to celibacy, were set at the head of the establishment at Pirana, pensioning off the multitudinous Saiyyids.

They, as their Muslim compeers suffered, gathered strength as reformist and fundamentalist movements during the 1880s and after. For, as pan-Hindu and pan-Muslim movements awoke a new awareness, they found themselves castigated as indifferent Hindus and bad Muslims. A great many abandoned their syncretic faith and became Vaishnavas, Dadupanthi or Ramanandi. More recently, some have valiantly sought to defend themselves as the really genuine Indians of an age-old faith which synthesizes the best of two of the world's best faiths.

Without going into the social and economic base of Ismaili or *Nizari-Ismaili* doctrine, it may be noted that it certainly marks a radical dissent not only from the official Sunni but also from the Itha Ashari orthodoxy. It comes close to Sufism in its more exalted moments and possibly also to Vedanta. Its brief and stormy career as a power-state is marked by an apocalyptic dream and a cataclysmic fall. In India too—in Multan, in Delhi and in Gujarat—it was a persecuted cult. Hence, it was no accident that during the age of the Sultans and their successors, (barring the age of Akbar) it developed more in Rajput areas than in the Sultanate and the Mughal ones. Possibly, this attitude together with the difficulties of communication coupled with the not so unnatural urge for influence and affluence led the Pir to cut the link.

In its Indian form, especially in its earlier phase, this Nizari formulation may be seen not as a break but as a continuation of the tradition, which is unlike the conversions to the other sects of Islam. As such it is a dissent from Hinduism as practised by these people and a reform of some of its features. Basically, perhaps, the acceptance of a creed which appears to be a better version of the existing one, without any promise of economic, political or alternative inducements, indicates the rejection of a certain religious understanding. But it also signifies more. It marks the rejection of a sector of the social and religious system which is inadequate more for the spiritual needs than for the mundane needs. As such, by rejection, it highlights certain aspects which have a living, existential value that need immediate attention. It also separates a part of experience which can be excised without materially affecting the rest. What could have led to this sense of dissatisfaction? Since the thrust is at the religious level, the spiritual *qua* spiritual may be considered first.

The medieval times represent a period of intense religious feeling; so intense that it is probably difficult for a Western-educated man to conceive the commitment the individual had to his faith. But at the same time, the practice of religion at the popular level seems to have reached a rather sterile phase. It had become formal, organizational, ritualistic, and prescribing

duties without explaining them, clung to a traditionalism without examining if the whole of it had responses yet. Moreover, it opened expensive avenues to salvation which limited them to the upper classes. It had become a formalistic religion of fasts, observances and highly 'brahmanised' rituals which legitimized the position of the upper classes but left the lower ones dissatisfied.

Simultaneously, beginning with the ninth and the tenth centuries if not earlier, a more popular movement of faith which emphasized personal commitment and devotion and did not deny the ritualistic faith but was simpler at the popular level, was coming into being. Examples of the several forms include Vaishnavism, the growing influence of Nath Yogis, and others. Significantly, like the mystics later, they did not question the rationale of the system but its current form; they even retained Brahminic rituals like *yajna* without undue emphasis. With the mystics, this trend takes a more definite form, for they had no basic quarrel with the traditional form; for they not only valued traditional mythology, symbology and idiom but also often used them. But what they rejected was sterile ritualism, and those who had developed a vested interest in it, as representing an oppressive social and economic order. Consequently, a more meaningful faith for the laity and a personal commitment which demanded greater of austerities of those who sought enlightenment than was the case until then, was preached by them.

The Nizari message with its deeply traditional imagery and devotional idiom—as also its use of the Nathpanthi pantheon—fits into this situation, as well as the other devotional movements. Some of the *ginans* are so highly charged with devotion that they recall Narsi Mehta, the contemporary Vaishnava poet of Saurashtra, who is said to have outraged his Nager caste-men by associating with the Dheds; he was rehabilitated only by a miracle.

At the social level, the urge for reform in the religious sphere was seldom felt by either the privileged classes or the lower-most untouchables or near-untouchables, even though they are equally affected. To take the present case the people most affected were the peasants belonging to the 'clean' castes, the Lohanas in Kacchh and Saurashtra and the kunbis in mainland Gujarat. Meagre information is available as to the reasons for this, but a tentative hypothesis may be suggested. The caste system has been known to be a complex of autonomous entities revolving round a Brahminic order, within which the other privileged castes have also been deeply integrated. The others stayed, especially in an age of poor communications, at varying distances, having their own tribal or caste mores which were indifferently integrated into the system. In Gujarat, this seems to have been the case with the immigrants who entered the region in the early medieval period, preceding the Turkish conquest, such as the Gurjars; or in the 14th and 15th centuries the Kathis, Jadeja Rajputs, Lohanas and others. The large-scale and continuous immigration of these people in Saurashtra and north Gujarat caused upheavals, which unfortunately because of a bias have been ignored by historians.

Saurashtra became an area of conflict, for territory of course, between the new entrants and the older ones. Add to this, in the hinterland was the land policy of the Sultans, which in their own interest, favoured the new-comers to the detriment of the old.

This state of flux introduced an unsettling environment, with new castes and new entrants trying to push their way up. It could also seem that the new entrants coming from Sind and areas beyond were insufficiently integrated into the Brahminic order. Thus, the Kathis were able to worship a God all their own, the Sun, in which the Brahmans were not involved. The Lohanas had their own Pir, the Darya Pir, the spirit of the river Indus which they believed had served them well in helping them to escape to Saurashtra. Thus, not only were these groups—a section and not the masses—ready for a new formulation but they also felt that it might help them to gain a new status. Two alternatives appeared in this context. First, most of them accepted the Vaishnava faith. This shows that there was a lacunae which had to be filled by a monotheistic, personal faith. Second, almost invariably, such conversions are preceded by miracles, following which group-conversions take place. Significantly, the role of the leader is crucial for it is after him that the group follows the new faith by converting. This is an indication of tribal solidarity that allows for a chain reaction. Even now, in many of these castes, Matia for instance, caste organizations are strong and control the group effectively. The role of the leaders, *mukhis*, thus becomes crucial; and this role together with the role of the Pir, in actual circumstances, accounts for the sporadic process. Significantly, these nominal conversions were succeeded by the deeper and selective Islamization of a few while the rest continued in their traditional way. To illustrate, the Momnas and the Sheikhdas, who are wholly agrarian and relatively poor and backward, remained faithful followers of their Pirs. This, despite the heroic effort of their Pir Mashaikh, at the end of the 17th century, to change their mores to a more Islamic form. The Satpanthis, with their unique institution of Kakas and virtually pensioned Saiyyids, continued in their traditional ways, at least until the coming in of the reformist fundamentalism of the 19th century. On the other hand, the Lohana Khojahs who took to trade were closely integrated in the faith; the Islamizing urge of the 19th century brought in them an awareness of the wider Islamic world. Likewise, we find that the Lohana Momnas—traders—are deeply Islamized. In a similar setting is the case of the weavers of central Gujarat, the Tais, who switched to Islam some time in the 14th century, and then taking to a more puritanic and persecuted form, the Mahdavi faith in the 15th century.

Thus, the religious sensitivity of the medieval age reflects the strains felt by a people and their response to it. It seems that religion, more specifically sectarian observances in the religious sphere, was the area of experience in which tensions were expressed. However, solutions, actualized in other areas of experience were also expressed in the religions. In this way, may possibly be explained of the nature of medieval society, which was highly localized

both in terms of interaction with other units and in terms of in-group solidarity. The joint family, the caste and the village had a conditioning effect on the individual psyche; they defined goals and deviancy, provided a niche for belonging. Individual rights were defined in the context of the collective, so that any great emphasis on individuality was seen as a form of deviancy. This 'deviancy' was all too common, for instance in matters of property; but it occurred as a conflict, not as dissent which questioned the system.

Finally, dissent is thus muffled because the socializing process itself deeply and effectively conditions the individual psyche against certain basic questions. Then, again, the economic base and the social structure which rose upon it was static. Moreover, it also had the capacity to contain shocks without losing equilibrium, i.e. it was amendable to rectifications, alterations, but not to any radical shifts. Given this environment, social forms tended to petrify and social consciousness acquired an innate, deeply rooted conservatism. The individual, socialized to this traditionalism, insulated from shocks which could produce anomie, acquiesced to it. In this context, if we look to Europe, we find major shifts occur there when the significant change in economy and society begins taking place, when feudalism begins to crack merchant capital, and the national state begins to emerge challenging the strongly created religious ideology. The uncertainty thus rendered the system vulnerable to basic questions, such as loyalty, deeply held beliefs, etc. For it is in such a situation that the stage is set for the breakdown of what Sebastian de Grazia has called the political community, and the resultant anomie is the fountain head of dissent.

Discussion

on Paper by S C Misra

S T LOKHANDWALLA/ I would like to discuss three points in the context of the *Nizari Ismaili* community in India. The points are: the theory of *Imama*, the concept of *Qiyama*, and their instrumentality for attempts at symbiosis and fusion of different religious beliefs and systems.

The Ismaili heresy in Islam was both an intellectual and a social movement, and one of the major dissent movements in Islam, with considerable political orientation. Before its political success, it acted as a catalytic agent for reforms and changes in the third century orthodox or Sunni Islam. For example, the exaltation of the Imam to near-Godhood is a very old Shi'i and more especially Ismaili doctrine. Although the remoteness of God necessitated the almost limitless exaltation of the figures of Imams, yet they are always named and defined. There is a philosophic *tanzih*, an abstraction and an absolute unwillingness to ascribe any characteristic to God which might conceivably have anything in common with the created being, to the point of avoiding a noun while referring to God. The exaltation of the Imam then becomes quite natural. In the Persian Nizari terminology, *Khudawand Ta'ala* refers to God and *Khudawand* to the Imam. The Imam is at once the origin and model of mankind and teleological pivot of mankind in all ages. This Perfect-Man of the philosophers was equated with the Imam; and from here the idea passes into Sufism which had at one time definite links with Ismailism. Thus, the Ismaili concept of *Imama* was in its early formulation unencumbered and unrestrained by the trammels of the *Shari'a*. The *Shari'a* was, to Ismailis, only the outward shell of a fuller and richer knowledge whose repository was the Imam. A section of the early Ismaili believed that the *Shari'a* of the prophet, Muhammad, came to an end with the coming of the seventh Imam, Muhammad bin Isma'il. At any rate, the concept of *Imama* was a great instrument of change.

Another instrument for change for the Ismailis was that of *ta'wil*, or interpretation. For sectarian purposes they could use the interpretation to bring any desired change, and this was done at many points of time.

The word *Qiyama*, in common Muslim parlance, is the day of resurrection. But to the Ismailis, it had a special connotation. For instance, with the coming of the Seventh Natiq, it was believed that the *Shari'u* of the Prophet will end. It is the Seventh Natiq who ushers in the *Qiyama*, the millenium, the utopia. He ends the old dispensation and ushers in a new era 'filling the world with justice and happiness', as the new dispenser. He is the *Qa'imu'l-Qiyama*. This again is a built-in mechanism, that Hasan was using when he declared the *Qiyama* and the end of the *Shari'a* of Muhammad. However, his successors had to recant and return to orthodoxy.

When Ismailism came to India, it was free from the constraints of Muslim orthodoxy. Orthodox Islam had come into contact with Judaism and Christianity, and so it gives these religions a certain place in their scheme of things. By the fourth century of *Hijra* orthodox Islam is a closed book. Any other religion it came across afterwards was outside the pale of Islam, and was a system of *Kufr*. On the other hand, Ismaili Islam was still open to influence from and adjustments with other religions. In the Indian locale, it came to terms with Hinduism and using the tools of *Ta'wil* it produced a synthesis which definitely needs further study.

S C MISRA/ The comment of Lokhandwalla does not require any reply and supplements what I have said. However, the early Ismailis did not go against their code by accepting the Hindu pantheon.

Y M PATHAN/ There is a spill over of these Nizari movements into Maharashtra, in Khandesh, where the Satpanthis follow many of the Hindu rituals and codes; these groups were converted from the Mali or other lower castes.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ From what has been stated, the Ismailis appear much closer to the Indian way of looking at life than the Semetic one, specially the acceptance of a cyclical view of time. But who took the initiative in this matter, the Arabs or the Hindus? Did they really know the contents of the *Atharva-veda*, as suggested, for this is the remotest *Veda*, from the Semetic viewpoint?

S C MISRA/ The cyclical world-view is ingrained in many cultures besides the Indian one, and needs a further discussion. Of course, the common interpretation is to state that Ismailis were moulded in the Indian situation, but this is a false interpretation. These people are the most persecuted by the orthodox Muslims, even more than by the Hindus. Technically these sects may be Islamic in nature, but the belief of the existential faiths continued. The initiative to assimilate was taken by the *pirs* and the *shaikhs*. *Atharva-veda* was understood in its popular connotation in what it actually is. For example, Ali is supposed to be *Kalki Avatar* in the popular version and these are symbolic representations.

SURAJ BHAN/ Since these movements arise in certain castes, parallels may be sought in ancient India also. Were the reasons economic?

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ What is the importance of the socio-economic basis in conversions? Is it only for a psychological reason, for those who are proselytized? Did they question the basic issues?

S C MISRA/ It is probably true that the economic basis of changing religion is more basic than the psychological one, rather than the reverse order which I seem to have emphasized. But the basic values were not really questioned, and this requires further study. Perhaps Irfan Habib's hypothesis, of agrarian change and religions for the Punjab may be applied here. But this requires serious investigation.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Your main contention is that protest involves basic changes in the structure of society. If structural change is to precede dissent, then there are identifiable among the various phases of Indian history, certain structural changes. Today, with industrialization, we seem to be doing the same. But if we consider this in the European context a breakdown of the intellectual value system is essential; then, we should expect the same in India. But this is not so. It implies that we can undergo structural change without tearing ourselves apart. Nevertheless, we have to examine both these insights, and further examine the possibilities. But the point is, if society is structural and decentralized in India, then we must consider it not as ideational. Consequently, we must reconsider the matter of dissent in Indian society in a totally different set-up.

S C MISRA/ This point of Ravinder Kumar opens a whole new avenue of discussion, specially the comparing of Indian and European experiences. In Gujarat, in the 14th and 15th centuries, there is the emergence of the Gujarati language and literature, the formation of a new agrarian class, and the change in the revenue system which was very radical; and, with this change, a whole new range of people come into the Saurashtra to replace the population by a new religion. Can these by any standard be called major changes? Despite all these changes, there was no questioning of the system; for, there is not even a school or order which is atheistic, or even questions the ruling order. Therefore, what people generally seek is radical reform, rather than dissent, i.e., it may be called a protest against the disease of the system rather than the system itself. On the other hand, in Europe with the emergence of the Protestant movement and its beginning even much earlier, a virtual breakdown of the system, with the emergence of mercantile communities, and the concept of nation-state, may be seen.

C PARVATHAMMA/ What is the status of women among these converts, of the Nizari groups? If you state that conversion to Islam among these groups was

not real conversion, then what is meant by conversion, if it does not mean that religious conversions could bridge the social cleavages among the social classes? In fact, even the idea of pollution in life-cycle, such as birth, menstruation, death, etc., exists among some Muslim communities quite rigorously. Is it possible to make a distinction between older converts and new converts; that is, the former are more conservative and the latter more radical? Finally, did a change in religion bring about a change in occupation or bring about other forms of social mobility, or were there other beneficial effects due to conversion?

PUSHPA SURI/ What was the inducement for these conversions? Does it really mean any rejection or breaking away from their early lives? What was the major effect of conversion, if they continued to follow the old rituals, etc.? What was the role of *Kalma* and the *Quran* amongst these people? Does not the word *Dassound* and the idea, appear the same as it is in the Sikh scripture?

S C MISRA/ There is no change in the status of women. This is true even upto the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when women neither inherited property nor had a right of succession, despite urban influence from the medieval times. The 'conversion-change' as a whole does not basically change the social and economic area, and the social system remains unaltered. There is no hard evidence like there is in the Punjab in the Batala documents, about woman and property. But for a long time the Hindu law governed the Muslims and others in Gujarat. As far as *Shariat* is concerned since it is a patrilineal law, the woman or daughter was not given any share. But this was not always strictly followed and the daughter was given due share in many areas. There is also a ban on widow remarriage which was not there originally, since Muhammad himself had married a widow.

Regarding the concept of pollution, since there is the Hindu one and the Muslim one, these people do not accept the Muslim concept. There are also specific pollution concepts among these communities, such as when a calf is born there is a purification ceremony of a simple kind, or when somebody smokes tobacco, eats garlic, onion, etc. there is a kind of purification ceremony. In this way there is a local orthodoxy which develops into a caste orthodoxy, which is neither Muslim nor Brahminic.

As regards older and newer initiates, there is a small section which was highly Islamized in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For example, trading communities often become more Islamized, leaving far behind the converted agrarian people. This is perhaps because their occupation as traders exposes them to other outside influences. However, this explanation may not be true for other areas.

There have been no material inducements for conversion as far as we know and, therefore, other explanations are required. It is possible that since the existential belief system was inadequate, a new religion appeared, and there

is a sense of break in terms of a total system when conversion takes place. At whatever level a spiritual belief be, its existence is necessary for all people. For instance, while the *Kalma* and the *Quran* do not mean much to these people, (and this has been a general rule), these do give a sense of identity as symbols. By and large, the faith is nominal, since these groups continue also to believe themselves to be 'Hindus'. Many of these people have changed to Rajputs. For example, around 1880 there was a movement amongst Satpanthis, who after going to Bombay and returning, were aware of other beliefs; some were influenced by the Swami Narain Movement, and became converts to Vaishnavism. Nevertheless, they continue to remain a separate caste or a group.

Basically, the problem is, if we use the words Hinduism and Islam without the context of social system, there is confusion. For example, there is no Islamic social system as such in India, even during the twentieth century. Each area has its own social system. This is true of Baluchistan and the North-Western area Muslims also, for the social system of a Baluchi Pathan and a Brahui Pathan or other orthodoxics is quite different. Therefore, various groups do get localized into local beliefs and have their own orthodoxies and deviances amongst them.

Dassound is probably much older than the *Mehandvi*, and is a basic feature for a long time because of its economic incentive to the *Pirs* and others who even today in Gujarat, (say in Dholka and Sidhpur), virtually live on this income.

M S A RAO/ Given the factors of agrarian oppression, of caste oppression and relative deprivation in terms of economic privileges and religion, various innovations were tried to improve Hinduism by certain acceptances of Islam. In such a situation, would it be right to say that the social situation of a given system can give rise to a different belief system? We are here seeking a relationship between social situation and the belief system.

The other point is about the varying political situation which influenced the belief system. Whenever there was Mughal dominance, many of the Hindu beliefs were forgotten. But when there was a waning political situation, Hindu beliefs were enhanced.

In the context of structural change, is it dissent and protest if it leads only to a change of belief systems? Often, doctrinal changes also take place, but it would be important to know details about the superordination and subordination relationships in changing religions. It seems that there would be significant changes in the social relationships and roles with changing belief systems. The objection I have is that structural changes cannot be spoken off in black and white terms.

S C MISRA/ While caste oppression was there, but to that extent deprivation was not so much present amongst the middle groups who were converted. In

areas which were dominantly under Rajput rulers or regional Sultans, which were away from the influence of the Mughals, barring the time of Akbar, this situation does not hold true. Therefore, political dominance in this case does not play any prominent role. Religious persecution was not there in the case of the Rajputs, or even the regional Sultans. Mughal rulers also did not have a persecution mania, though why Aurangzeb behaved in the manner he did cannot be easily explained.

The point of structural change and belief system requires in-depth investigation because answers in historical evidence are not available as yet; and, further field work is necessary. However, it is possible for people to reject an entire belief system and yet continue the social system. This is specially true in the context of the problem of Satpanthi and such other groups which should be examined in their local and regional settings. Confusion arises when pan-Islamic or pan-Hinduism which has developed in recent years due to mass communication, is made as a point of reference. For instance, if one goes to the field (such as the area around Baroda in Champaner) such clear-cut questions about religion, about rituals and deities will not be answerable by these communities. Moreover, until the end of nineteenth century there seems to be no discrimination against these people; nor were they looked down upon because 'to each his faith', has been a basic concept of living. Changes in this belief came about with the fundamentalist and rationalist movements, and exploitation by petty traders and merchants.

R O DHAN/ In terms of interaction and solidarity, if these communities do form a group, why is it that only certain sections have been affected by the movements? Why is it that changes have only taken place at the religious level and not the agrarian or political level?

S C MISRA/ My hypothesis is that these communities really have a kind of tribal organization with the chief in the role of headman. This means that if the *Mukhi* or *Mukhia* changes, then the entire group changes. This is supported by the belief in their mythical origin. There may be other hypotheses. As regards the point of political changes, at least in the medieval period the common man was outside the political spheres, and he was more involved in social and cultural matters. This is why social tensions find expression in religious tension, rather than at the political level.

K M GEORGE/ Parallels of these converted Ismaili communities may be seen in Kerala or 'rice-converts'. Now, if the concept of the Imam is an important aspect of dissent, since it represents a reincarnation of God, does it not suggest something closer to other faiths rather than to Islam proper?

S C MISRA/ The rise of the entire Shia faith is related to a social movement. This begins with the rise of Ali and reaches its apex with the Nizari movement and its formulations. Because the position of the Imam is cardinal to its

faith, this is transmitted into the Indian experience, and the devotional concept has added to it. However, while it is difficult to date many of their texts historically, the rendering of the *Dasavatara* appears to be taken from the *Bhagavata* at that time, as it existed in its popular form. But it is incorrect to state that the Hindu faith was corrupted to suit these groups. Nathpanthis seem to have been influenced by monotheistic religions but it does not seem to me the case with the Nizari Ismailis, although the Nathpanthis' pantheon seems to have been incorporated somewhere in the *Dasavatara* texts.

J S Grewal

The Sikh Movement—A Historical Note

THE ORIGINS OF THE SIKH MOVEMENT HAVE TO BE TRACED TO ITS FOUNDER, Guru Nanak, and his reaction to the religious, social, and political environment at that time. Guru Nanak was thoroughly familiar with all of the religious beliefs and practices of his day, namely, with the Hindu sacred scriptures, with the six philosophical systems, with Saivism, Vaishnavism, and with *Sannyasis*, *Bairagis*, *Jogis* and Jain monks, with the worshippers of Rama and Krishna, with Sadhs and Sants, and so on. He was no less familiar with Islam and its teachings, and speaks of the Quran and the Prophet, of the Shaikh and the *aulia*, and of the Mulla and the Qazi. He is largely preoccupied with discussing the role of the Pandit and the Jogi, with the Mulla and the Shaikh, and is very critical of the deities of Hinduism, the Prophet of Islam, and his contemporaries. There is only one category of individuals whom he appreciates and with whom he identifies himself—the Sadhs and Sants in general.

Guru Nanak was well-versed in the social situation, as he speaks about the royalty (both Hindu and Muslim), about the nobility (referring to Khans and Maliks), other officials and intermediaries, about peasants, artisans and craftsmen, and of course about the *varna* ideal of four castes (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) and the outcastes. While Guru Nanak's social comment as such is rather limited, he refers to the moral degradation in general and to lack of integrity among the various categories of people, repudiating caste as the basis of social differentiation. He upheld the ideal of equality.

Guru Nanak was exceptionally familiar with contemporary government and politics, for there was hardly any aspect of contemporary government and administration that was not known to him. This may be due to his experience as an employee of Daulat Khan Lodhi at Sultanpur for nearly a decade. He denounced discrimination by the rulers and depicts them as unjust and oppressive. However, he accepted the monarchical frame and the distribution of justice as the primary duty of the king, and officials were to be considerate towards their subjects, and the people to pay what is due to the

state. But Guru Nanak's primary allegiance was not towards any temporal king; it was to God, 'the true king of all'.

Guru Nanak did not merely denounce and condemn. With his own positive ideals, he came out with a solution for the social ills of his times. For him, the supreme purpose of human existence was salvation, that is, deliverance from the chain of death and re-birth. This salvation was the birthright of all mankind, irrespective of caste, creed and sex. Salvation was to be attained through right belief, right worship and right conduct, and never through renunciation.

Thus, as a result of Guru Nanak's activity there emerged a new religious entity. His compositions contained a whole system of beliefs which allowed for a distinct mode of worship, implicitly rejecting all other religious scriptures. For example, the followers of Guru Nanak used to offer congregational worship, and dine together in the community kitchen (*langar*). In short, the nucleus of the Sikh *Panth* came into existence during the lifetime of Guru Nanak.

Under the first four successors of Guru Nanak, followers of the Sikh movement increased considerably, though it is difficult to know the exact number. In the early seventeenth century, the author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* says that the Sikhs were to be found in nearly all the cities and towns of the Mughal Empire, perhaps also in towns and cities outside the Empire. Occupationally, the three major professions of the Sikhs mentioned by him are trade, agriculture and service. Evidently, therefore, the Sikhs were not confined to towns and cities but were also spread to the rural areas in the province of Lahore. Thus, the social composition of the Sikhs in the early seventeenth century consisted mainly of trading communities (particularly *khatris*), agriculturalists (particularly the *jats*), artisans and craftsmen. The Sikh Gurus not only founded new townships attracting traders and craftsmen, they also undertook intensive missionary work in the countryside.

More important than the increasing numbers of the Sikhs was their organization under the leadership of the Guru. Even in the days of Guru Nanak it was not possible for the Guru to cater to the needs of individual Sikhs at all places. Within a quarter of a century after his death it became necessary for Guru Amardas to appoint his representatives to look after the affairs of Sikh *sangats* at places other than his own headquarters. As the number of such local *sangats* increased, the function and the status of the Guru's representative became more important and he was given the dignified title of the *Masand*. Under Guru Arjan, the *Masand* became an essential link between the Guru and the local *sangats*. Among other things, the *Masand* collected voluntary offerings from the Sikhs and submitted them to the Guru. From the very beginning the Sikh *Panth* was financially independent of any outside source or patron.

For congregational worship and community meals *dharamsalas* were constructed in all those towns and cities where Sikh *sangats* were to be found. Beginning with Guru Amardas, the Sikhs came to adopt certain distinct

social ceremonies and Guru Arjan compiled the compositions of his predecessors and other saints, besides his own. The *Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan came to serve as a definitive scripture for the Sikhs. The compositions of Bhai Gurdas and the earliest *Janam-sakhis* clearly indicate that in the early seventeenth century the Sikhs were conscious of their distinct socio-religious identity. In fact, they thought of the Sikh *Panth* as the third *Panth*, the other two being Hinduism and Islam. Because of its well-knit organization, the allegiance of its members to the Guru, its financial independence and the consciousness of a distinct entity, the Sikh *Panth* had become a state within the Mughal Empire.

Precisely at this stage, the Mughals decided to interfere in the affairs of the Sikhs. Guru Arjan was executed through Jahangir's orders in 1606. Guru Arjan's son and successor, Guru Hargobind, decided to prepare for self-defence. He actually fought a few battles against the Mughal *faujdar*s, but had to escape into hill territories not directly under the Mughal Empire. However, by his independent attitude and activity Guru Hargobind raised a basic issue. For a long time, the Sikhs had cherished two loyalties; one to their Guru and the other to the State. Never before had they been forced to choose between these two loyalties. Now they had to make a choice. It is a measure of Guru Hargobind's achievement that the majority of the Sikhs supported him in his new measures and attitudes. It may be noted that the transformation of the *Panth* was inseparable from the transference of the goals of the Sikh movement.

There were tensions within the Sikh *Panth* much before Guru Hargobind succeeded to the *gaddi* of Guruship, and these tensions increased in the face of external interference. Even Guru Arjan's nomination to the *gaddi* was not accepted by his elder brother Prithi Chand who, subsequently, opposed Guru Arjan throughout his pontificate. The followers of Prithi Chand did not acknowledge Guru Hargobind as the legitimate successor of Guru Arjan. When Guru Hargobind nominated his younger grandson, Har Rai, as his successor, the elder grandson Dhirmal did not accept his nomination. Similarly, when Guru Har Rai nominated his younger son, Harkrishan, as the successor the elder son, Ram Rai, did not accept this nomination as valid. Both Ram Rai and Guru Harkrishan were called to Delhi by Aurangzeb who could now think of deciding the issue of succession to the *gaddi* of Guruship among the Sikhs. Thus, at the time of Guru Harkrishan's death in 1664 the fortunes of the Sikh *Panth* were at a very low ebb because of the internal division of the Sikh *Panth*, specially due to external interference. The followers of Prithi Chand, Dhirmal and Ram Rai included some *Masands* and all of them were pro-establishment. There was no leader among the Sikhs in 1664 to carry forward the attitude and measures of Guru Hargobind.

Along with these developments, there was the execution in 1675 of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the prophet of reassurance, when Guru Gobind Singh came forward with a new formulation. His problem was to impart unity to the Sikh

Panth and to defend the Sikh faith and the Sikh *Panth* against external interference. The institution of the Khalsa was meant to solve the problems of both unity and defence. However, those very measures which were meant for self-defence sharpened the conflict between Guru Gobind Singh and his opponents. Before the Khalsa was instituted, Guru Gobind Singh had come into conflict with a few of the hill chiefs and the Mughal *faujdar*s in the hills. After the institution of the Khalsa, he came into conflict with all the hill chiefs and eventually, with the Mughal Government.

Guru Gobind Singh gave a new orientation to the Sikh *Panth*. Personal Guruship ended with his death and Guruship came to be vested in the scriptures and the *Panth*. Guru Govind Singh did not have any political ambition, but his measures of self-defence lead eventually to political action. Within a few years after his death in 1708 his followers established a sovereign State in the Punjab. They attributed their success to God's grace through the Gurus Nanak and Govind Singh and they thought of justice as the *raison d'être* of their State.

The rule established by the immediate followers of Guru Gobind Singh proved to be short-lived. Banda Bahadur was defeated and then executed in Delhi in 1716 and for nearly half a century the Sikhs had to wage a relentless struggle for survival and ascendancy. In 1765, they struck a new coin at Lahore as the declaration of their sovereign status. This coin bore the inscription which had been used by Banda on his seal. Theoretically, the Sikhs derived their power from God through the grace of their Gurus. Also, for collective action they adopted *gurmata*s which were carried out by the *Dal-Khalsa*. However, the scope was limited to measures of offence and defence. Once the Sikh leaders made conquests and occupied territories, they acted like kings in their respective jurisdiction. They tried to administer justice to the best of their capacities and they extended state patronage to Hindus and Muslims as well as to their co-religionists. However, they did not work out any new political institutions and they did not use their power to bring about any social change.

Indeed, if we look at the Sikh social order of the Sikh times we find the return of the kind of stratification which Guru Nanak had witnessed in his own times. There was the royalty at the top, followed by Sardars and rich Jagirdars, peasantry and trading communities, artisans and craftsmen, and even landless labourers and domestic servants. An eighteenth century Sikh writer, expounding an ideal Sikh social order, even visualized slavery in the future Sikh State!

In retrospect we can see that Guru Nanak conceived of equality primarily in religious terms. The ideal of equality did have its social implications and it was partially translated into social and political terms also. However, Guru Nanak did not attack the socio-economic structure directly, so that it persisted even when the followers of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh were wielding political power. It may not be a mere coincidence that the first reform

movement within Sikhism, the Nirankari Movement, appeared during the period of Sikh rule itself. Without a clear break with the given socio-economic structure, the Sikh movement, like many other religious movement in pre-industrial societies, could move only in a recurring cycle. During the first three hundred years of its development, that cycle was more or less complete.

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Discussion

on Paper by J S Grewal

N SANJEEVI/ Was there any impact of Tamil literature and culture on Guru Nanak, and is any reference to be found in the sacred texts to this? Why has Sikh religion not become a pan-Indian religion like Islam or Christianity, and is confined only to the old Punjab? What is the major point of dissent and protest in Sikh religion, and its contribution to Indian metaphysics and philosophy?

V K VASISHTA/ Did the formation of the Khalsa order lead to the destruction of the Sikh order, and its expansion?

A R KHAN/ Did the Sikh Gurus distinguish between *Shaiks* and *Ulemas*? When did the word *Sikh* come into existence? You have made a distinction between the Sikh state and the Mughal state. But was there a Sikh state having a regular revenue? We know that there were *Qazis* within the Sikh state: Were they appointed by the Sikhs themselves or the Mughal rulers?

T R SHARMA/ You have stated that Sikhism was a third religion, after Hinduism and Islam. How is this to be explained, if during the time of Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs were organized to protect the Hindus and the ccw? Did not Guru Govind Singh worship the goddess Durga, and is he also not a Hindi poet?

C PARVATHAMMA/ What was Guru Nanak's caste? Is the *Guru* in Sikhism supposed to be a celibate? Is the Guru nominated by one person, or by a group? What is the implication of the title Singh or Sardar? Is it true that the term Sardar is not applied to untouchables who are converted to Sikhism? If we seek answers to all these questions, Sikhism appears to be a replica of Hinduism.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ If Sikhism is considered a separate religion by Grewal, what is the definition of religion? In the context of an all-pervasive Hindu

tradition that was prevalent at the time, can one really understand Sikhism and its origin, in isolation?

SURESH SHARMA/ The entire Sikh movement may be viewed, and explained, in terms of the presence of the entire spectrum of the *bhakti* movement which had a capacity for intensive communication despite barriers of language and other constraints. The example of the journey of Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore in 1885 from Calcutta to Simla may be given here. He spent two to three months in Amritsar at the Golden Temple, joining in the worship and devotion. This was not as an act of tolerance of another religion, but something that came instinctively, since it belonged to the same national (*bhakti*) tradition. Thus, it was in this wide-ranging receptivity of the *bhakti* tradition that Sikhism was born.

DEVAHUTI/ The idea of God being the true one suggests some affinity to Christianity. Was there any influence of Christianity in Guru Nanak's teachings? Is there any parallel between the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sanga*; and the *Guru*, *Guruvani* and *Panth*? Does Sikhism as a protest movement cease to be so when it becomes a political force during the Mughal period?

RESPONSE

J S GREWAL/ The influence of Tamil literature on Sikhism is not clear, and further work is required. Guru Nanak's teachings have to be understood in the context of regional areas, and it was confined to the Punjab because it was the core area of its existence, specially because of Punjabi which was used for writing the sacred works. One of the other possible explanation is: had Sikhism remained a religious faith and developed a universal church, or if it had turned into a militant movement and not itself transformed its goal to political ones, it may have spread to other areas.

As regards the question of why the Sikh movement, or Sikhism, should be considered a dissent and protest movement, this depends upon the definition. If to dissent means to be different or to be against prevalent orthodox views, then, during the fifteenth century, the establishment consisted of a composite people who believed in Islam, and the Brahmans or the Jogis. These are the people against whom Guru Nanak was reacting, and even those who believed in the *bhakti* cult—in Rama and Krishna. The reaction against all these elements was a very comprehensive one, with the exception that Guru Nanak identified himself with the 'Sadhya and Sant'. This movement began in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and with it he felt a strong feeling of kinship.

As regards the role of Khalsa, in both its achievement as well as the formation of the political state, there was no Khalsa order as such. If by the Khalsa order is meant the army, then this consisted of Muslims and Rajputs who did

interfere in political affairs. Perhaps, if one is referring to the *Nihangas* then those groups were different to the Khalsa. For example, during Ranjit Singh's time the *Nihangas* did interfere in the matters of state although Ranjit Singh very carefully guided his political policies. But this did not have anything to do with Sikhism or the Khalsa.

Ravinder Kumar's question: How do we define a religion in the context of the Sikhs? I define it as a system of interrelated beliefs and doctrines that become a complete entity by itself, i.e., one can refer to it without going outside the system. This distinct entity is also characterized separately by modes of worship, dress, and so on. Of course, the basic search for the purpose of life in this religion is the same as in the others. This is because what was universal at that time was the interpretation of the world in terms of say, *Maya* and other concepts. Moreover, if we view ideas in Sikhism separately, in terms of origins and background parallels in Hinduism may be found everywhere. But if we view it as a total system of beliefs or set of doctrines then it becomes distinct and relevant. The same questions may be raised in the case of the origin of all religions, including Islam and Christianity. With reference to the use of the third *Panth*, Bhai Guru Das refers to it as an idea which is the distinct entity of a group of people. This may be connected with my definition of a new religion as a system of beliefs and doctrines.

The term Sikh was used by Guru Nanak himself. The Sikh state in the Mughal Empire is used as a metaphor, because it was not territorial unit of the Sikhs. It only suggest that there was a Sikh order which was virtually autonomous in the political state. *Qazis* and others continued to be appointed in later Sikh states, as it had happened with the Mughal rulers but the appointing authority was now the Sikh ruler. There was thus continuity of the system, so that revenues, general administration were applicable equally to the Hindus and Muslims.

There is no normal equation of the *Guru* and God as far as Sikh theology is concerned. But there are certain questions posed with regard to the equation of the *Guru* and God in Guru Nanak's teachings. This is in the sense that God alone is the True Guru. So that *Shabd*, for Guru Nanak meant of divine communication; between divine reality and man. Of course, Guru Nanak did consider his mission as having divine sanction; and, therefore, the sayings also become divine, i.e., Guru Granth Sahib became the divine sayings of the *Guru*.

The 'Guru'-ship was not hereditary in any way; for, many of the Gurus were disciples whilst after the fourth Guru, one of the sons was appointed. The word Singh was first used by Guru Gobind Singh to distinguish the Khalsa order from the others. Sardar came to be used when the Sikhs became rulers.

As regards the influence of Christianity, in the seventeenth century Christians are mentioned by Bhai Guru Das. But this needs further elaboration.

Baidyanath Saraswati

Notes on Kabir: A Non-literate Intellectual

THE FIRST HISTORICAL EVENT OF PROTEST IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION OCCURRED IN the sixth century BC when Jainism and Buddhism repudiated the authority of an elitist culture called Brahminism.

The Tradition of Non-conformity

In denying the authority of the Vedas, Jainism is perhaps the oldest form of non-conformity in India. It revolted against the Vedic sacrifices—excited pity for the protection of dumb animals—and in doing so, for the first time in the history of religion, called social forces to its aid. It also socialized the notion that ‘man’s religious consciousness must be the result of his own private realization of truth.’ This gave impetus to the evolution of the idea of sect, and Jainism became the first organized sect in India. Jainism was followed immediately by Buddhism; in fact, both flourished contemporaneously. Gautama, the Buddha, accepted from Jainism its denunciation of Vedic sacrifices and its compassion for dumb animals; he, of course, extended this compassion to man himself suffering from the bondage of birth, old age, sickness and death. But in all essential respects his teachings were identical with those of the Upanishads; he acted at best as a bridge between the Vedic Brahminism and the non-Vedic Jainism. However, in socializing religious ideas both Jainism and Buddhism followed the same path—both took up the cause of the common people wandering in ignorance, asserted a common spiritual right for all men, sought compassion and love for all life, preached in the language of the common people, and rejected the authority of the arrogant brahmins dividing the society into high and low. As a consequence of this challenge, the unorganized non-Jains and non-Buddhists now held themselves in some sort of unity round the brahman priesthood which allowed religion to be cultivated by a special class of people using a special language, performing expensive rites, sacrificing dumb animals for transient desires, and enforcing its superiority over the rest of mankind. In sociological terms, the *dharmayuddha*—the

righteous war—which Jainism and Buddhism waged against Brahminism was a struggle between the forces of egalitarianism and elitism.

In course of time the organization of Jainism and Buddhism got weakened, but what came out as a result of their struggle with Brahminism proved itself a more effective leaven to the growth of egalitarianism in Indian society. This was Hinduism. Though Buddhism died out in India, we believe that the memory of the compassionate Buddha was scrupulously preserved in the cult of Shiva. The Shiva and the *dhyani* Buddha share many elements in common in their form and character—their compassion and love for all, their renunciation and purity of life, and their involvement in the conception of death as the giver of *moksha* or *nirvana*. The influence of Buddhism on the early Saivism cannot possibly be ruled out. Perhaps the image of Shiva evolved in the *stupa*, and it is not without significance that Varanasi which was the principal seat of Buddhism subsequently became the most important centre of Saivism for the whole of India. The egalitarianism of the Buddha must have prevailed upon the Saivite saints of South India, who like the Buddha, preached in the language of the common people, gave up the distinction of high and low, and waged a war against elitism. Later on the Vaishnava saints of North India joined them in their struggle and intensified it greatly. Indeed, it is this '*santa* tradition' which has made Hinduism richer and progressive by waging a righteous war for the redemption of the common man.

The outstanding characteristics of the '*santa* tradition' which emerged as a protest against the orthodox traditional theology promoting elitism and religious exclusivism are as follows :

- (i) rejection of intense intellectualism in favour of the religion of the heart, i.e., the religion of love;
- (ii) taking recourse to a *guru* for spiritual guidance—considering words of the *guru* more valuable and authentic than the canons of traditional scriptures;
- (iii) treating all men as children of God and hence equal in social life;
- (iv) using the language of the common man in place of Sanskrit—the language of the elite; and
- (v) preaching righteous way of life instead of complex ritualism, and hence emphasis on *satya*, *ahimsa* and *kshama*. In brief, '*santa* tradition' is the harbinger of egalitarianism in Hindu society and civilisation.

The Environment of Kabir

Among the luminaries who built up the '*santa* tradition', Kabir (AD 1440-1518) occupies a distinct position as a ruthless critic of the weaknesses of institutional religions, a religious teacher whose feet were firmly planted upon the earth, and a non-literate genius who instead of philosophising religion made it easily accessible to the common man. His task was, of course, more difficult

than that of his predecessors in the 'santa tradition'. For, he was almost like a rudderless ship in his personal life and social environment; he had to open war on several fronts against two mighty forces—orthodox Brahminism and Islam. Kabir was disowned both by the Hindus and the Muslims. He was believed to be born of a Hindu mother who deserted him in infancy and was brought up by a Muslim weaver Niru and his wife Nima who lived in abject poverty. In his age Brahminism was invigorated by its triumph over Buddhism, and Islam was enjoying the patronage of bigotted Muslim rulers who were hostile to Hinduism. He lived and preached in Banaras—the citadel of orthodox Brahminism. There are various legends about his persecution, and it is said that on receiving complaints from brahmans and *maulavis* the Emperor Sikander Lodi banished him from Banaras late in his life. But Kabir was not a person to be shaken by such external forces.

According to tradition, Kabir somehow managed to become the disciple of Ramananda—a Vaishnava ascetic who was at that time at the height of his fame as the propounder of absolute loving faith in a personal god who could be approached through personal devotion by all, regardless of one's status in social life. It is said that Ramananda had admitted among his disciples persons belonging to the so-called low-caste, such as Sena, the barber, Dhana, the Jat, and Rai Das, the cobbler. He regarded Kabir, the Muslim weaver, as foremost among his disciples. Ramananda was undoubtedly a large-hearted saint, a liberal in social behaviour, but in his personal life he could perhaps never completely free himself from Brahminic influences; he did not give up his belief in the old mythology of the Hindu pantheon and in no way minimized the privileges granted to brahmans. After all he was a brahman by birth, and a disciple of an orthodox Ramanuji ascetic. With this background he could not have done more than what he did. But Kabir had the advantage of being brought up in a Muslim family and having been initiated by a liberal *guru* like Ramananda. As the legend has it, he also received instructions from Shaikh Taqqi who belonged to the Suhrawardi order of Sufis. He was thus connected with both Hinduism and Islam, and yet he was not firmly rooted in the orthodox cult of any of these religions. It is because of his unusual personal situation that Kabir could point out with considerable boldness and independence the weaknesses of Hindus and Muslims alike.

Kabir as a Critic of Tradition

From the point of view of orthodox Hinduism and Islam, Kabir was a heretic. He rejected the authority of the traditional scriptures and ruthlessly criticized the injurious beliefs and practices of both Hindus and Muslims. While deprecating idol worship he said:

*If by worshipping stone one can find God,
I shall worship the mountain;
Better than these stones are the stones
of the flour mill which grind men's corn.*

He denounced all external observance :

*Hindus keep fast on Ekadasi,
they eat only singhara and milk.*

*They abstain from grain,
but do not control the mind's desire.*

Next day they eat the flesh of beasts.

*Turks keep fast and hours of prayer;
they cry aloud in the name of God.*

*How will they find paradise?
When evening comes they slaughter fowls.*

*Devotion, sacrifice, and rosary, piety,
pilgrimage, fasting and alms.*

*Nine bhaktis, Vedas, the Book (the Quran),
all these are the cloaks of falsehood.*

*If by immersion in the water salvation be obtained,
the frogs bathe continually.*

*As the frogs so are these men,
again and again they fall into the womb.*

*O mind, you make your gods and goddesses,
and kill living creatures to make offerings to them;
But if your gods are true,
why do they not take them when grazing in the fields.*

*If it is God that makes thee to be circumcised,
why came not this cutting of itself?*

*If by circumcision one becomes Turk,
what then will be said of your woman?*

*'Half the body', so the wife is styled;
then you will remain Hindu!*

*By putting on the sacred thread,
does one become a brahman?*

*What hast thou given to women to wear?
She from birth is but a Sudra!*

Why dost thou eat the food she brings, O Pande?

Kabir condemned the display of *siddhis* by *yogi* ascetics and ridiculed some of their practices:

*Some shave men's locks,
and hang the black cord on their necks;
And pride themselves on the practice of yoga.
What credit is there in causing your seat to fly?
crow and kite also circle in the air.*

O Brother, never have I seen yogi like this!
Puffed up with pride he walks, caring for nothing;
He teaches the religion of Mahadeva,
and therefore is called a 'great mahant'.
In market and street he sits in the posture of a yogi;
He is an imperfect siddha, a lover of maya.
When did Dattatreya attack his enemies?
When did Sukdeva lay a cannon?
Or Vasudeva wind a horn?
They who fight are of little wisdom.
Shall I call such ascetics or bowmen?
They have renounced the world,
Yet covetousness rules their minds;
They wear gold and disgrace their order,
They gather horses and mares.
They acquire villages and go like millionaires,
A beautiful maiden is not fitting in the company of
Sanak and his kind.
He who carries a blackened vessel,
will one day be fouled.

His outright rejection of the Brahminic caste system came out in strongest words:

If birth from a brahman mother makes you a brahman,
why did you not come by another way?
If birth from a Turk makes you Turk,
why were you not circumcised in the womb?
If you milk black and yellow cows together
will you be able to distinguish their milk?

He dismissed the artificial division of men by caste and sect by saying:

I and you are of one blood,
and one life animates us both.
From one mother is the world born.
What knowledge is this which makes us separate?
All have come from the same country
and have landed at one ghat;
But the evil influence of this world
has divided us into innumerable sects.

It is said that once a brahman drank water from the hands of a young woman named Kamali and was later horrified to learn that she was the

daughter of a Muslim weaver, Kabir. He went to Kabir to express his sorrow at losing caste. To him Kabir gave the following answer :

*O Pandit, think, when thou drinkest water in the mud-dwelling,
wherein thou sittest the universe is contained ;
Where fifty six kotis of Yadavas perished,
eighty eight thousand men and munis ;
At every step prophets are buried,
they decayed to dust therein.
Fish, tortoise, and crocodile there gave birth,
the water is filled with blood.
The water of the river flows in through its channels ;
men and cattle dissolve in it.
The bones are dissolved and the marrow melted ;
how else comes the milk ?
Thou O Pandit, thou didst sit down to drink ;
yet the earthen pot thou accountest defiled.
Renounce the Vedas and the Book (the Quran),
O Pandit : all these are fictions of the mind.
Kabir says, hear, O Pandit,
these are your pious deeds.*

Kabir vehemently denounced untouchability and despised the brahmans for perpetuating such an unjust and evil practice :

*By the touch of others you brahmans
consider yourselves polluted.
Great pride never produces any good.
How will he, who is called the vanquisher
of the proud
bear with your pride ?
Do not oppress the weak ;
their sighs have great power,
By the puffs of the bellows
iron is converted to flames (or is utterly consumed).*

Here Kabir speaks as a rebel. He warns the oppressors of dire consequences, for if puffs from the skin of the dead animal can do so much, how much more the sighs of the living effect. When he announces, 'Kabir is standing in a market place with a burning stick in his hand', he obviously appears as an anarchist threatening bloody revolution.

Kabir not only preached non-conformity but actually lived up to it. When he knew that his death was nearing, he left Banaras and went to Maghar. According to Brahminic tradition one who dies at Banaras gets salvation but

the death at Maghar makes one to be born again as an ass. When his disciples urged him not to go to Maghar in the last stage of his life he told them:

*One who dies at Maghar becomes an ass!
A fine thing, you have lost your confidence in Rama!
What is Banaras, what the waste land of Maghar,
If Rama dwells in my heart?
If Kabir leaves his body in Banaras,
what credit will it be to Rama?*

Kabir did pass away at Maghar in perfect peace.

While Kabir was highly critical of the outward form and superstitions of age-old tradition, he himself did not create a new system. He preached and emphasized on the unity of god, but his doctrine cannot be accurately placed in any of the six recognized Hindu systems of philosophy. For, he was not a philosopher, he was a practical teacher who wanted to make people realize the futility of institutional religion and sectarian and social differences. Philosophers and scholars of religion may find him logically inconsistent in his conception of God and the divine reality; but in the social context his views were unmistakably consistent, bold and original; he systematically denounced everything that seemed to him unreal and meaningless. And it is this aspect of Kabir's life and teaching that can help us understand the tradition of non-conformity in Indian civilization.

Kabir as a Non-literate Intellectual

In my opinion the egalitarianism of the 'santa tradition' finds its fullest fruition in Kabir, for Kabir had struck at the very root of elitism—the booklore which the *pandits* and the *maulavis* had monopolized.

As is clear from the following verse, Kabir was a non-literate :

*I touch not ink nor paper,
nor take pen in my hand;
Of the greatness of the four ages
Kabir has given instructions with his lips.*

Or again,

*I am not skilled in book knowledge,
nor do I understand controversy.*

Kabir spoke in the dialect of the non-literate masses, and considered Sanskrit as a dead language:

*Sanskrit is like the water of a well;
Bhasa (the vernacular) is like the
flowing waters of the river.*

He taunted the *pandits* and the *mullas* for their pride in booklore:

*The pandits are in error by reading the Vedas.
They have no commonsense.*

*O Qazi, what book is expounded by thee?
All such as are pondering on the book are killed;
No one has obtained true knowledge;
Give up the book, adore Ram, O foolish one.*

*O maulavi, what books are you explaining?
Although day and night you remain babbling and jabbering
you have not found the one (true religion).*

According to Kabir,

*A man may read many books
before he dies and yet not be a pandit;
He is a pandit who understands the two-and-a-half letters
(prema) which form the word love.*

*He is a mulla who struggleth with his heart,
who by the instruction of the guru contendeth with Death,
And crusheth Death's pride.*

In emphasizing the importance of personal experience he reproached the *pandits* by saying:

*You say what is written on paper;
I describe what my eyes have seen.*

For, he believed that

*Should all the earth be turned into paper
and all the trees into pens;
Should the seven seas be turned into ink,
yet could not an account of God be written.*

Kabir wanted to impress upon the common people that booklore is not at all necessary for experiencing true knowledge or for establishing fellowship with God. In support of this he cites his own example:

*When the pandits and the mullas prescribed for me,
I have received no (advantage) from, and have abandoned.
My heart being pure, I have seen the Lord;
Kabir having searched and searched himself,
hath found God within him.*

Scholars of Hindi literature have laboriously unravelled the mysticism contained in the poems of Kabir. But my personal opinion is that most of them have failed to appreciate the real character of Kabir's poetry. Kabir did not compose poems for the elite—the professionals in theology; he addressed his poems to common non-literate people, and accordingly employed simplest imagery and metaphors which could be understood by all men. Being himself a weaver he employed the language of his trade frequently in the description of God:

*Weaver, weave the name of Hari,
 On which Gods, men and munis (sages) are meditating.
 He stretched the warp and took the shuttle.
 The four Vedas are the wheel.
 One beam is Rama Narayana,
 fulfilling the proposed work.
 He made the ocean of the world a trough;
 therein he kneads the starch.
 The body of that starch is stiffened;
 Few know that it is starch.
 Moon and sun, they are two treadles;
 in mid-ocean the warp is made.
 As the lord of the tribhuvan (three worlds)
 brushed on the starch, Syama joined the broken ends.
 He set the pegs, and when he took the reed,
 then was Rama bound.
 As the reed beat up the warp,
 the three lokas were bound: none he left free.
 The three lokas were made one loom;
 the warp worked up and down.
 The Eternal Purusha bade me to sit beside him;
 Kabir entered into Light.*

Or again,

*No one knew the mystery of that weaver,
 who came into the world and spread the warp.
 The earth and the sky are two beams;
 the sun and the moon are two filled shuttles.
 Taking a thousand threads,
 he spreads them lengthwise.
 today he weaveth still,
 but hard to reach the far-off end.
 Says Kabir, joining karma with karma,
 woven with unwoven threads,
 Splendidly the weaver weaves.*

In explaining the nature of truth Kabir used the incidents of common experience:

*Upside down the pitcher does not fill with water ;
But upright the vessel fills.
For one object, men have tried this way and that ;
Only by the Guru's gift will they cross safely.*

To drive home the idea of the nature of relationship between man and god he drew his imagery from day-to-day life using kinship terms—the bride-groom and the bride, the *guru* and the *shishya*, the father and the son and all relationships involving deep personal emotions. When he was about to die, it is said, he sang the following verse:

*Sing, O Bride, the bridal song of blessing,
to my house has come Raja Ram my husband.
My body, my soul, are transported with delight.
The five elements form his bridal canopy.
Ram Deva has come to be my guest ;
I am inebriated with the joy of youth.*

From the foregoing illustrations there remains no doubt that Kabir did not intend to pronounce mysticism; he wanted to speak the language of the divine in simplest words understandable to illiterate farmers, craftsmen, and shop-keepers. He belonged to the common folk and lived a simple life:

*Kabir says, I have neither
a thatched roof, nor hut ;
Neither have I a village nor a house.*

Kabir earned his livelihood at the loom, and he had hard days all his life. (Even today the weavers of Banaras live in abject poverty). He asked God to provide him with the necessities of life:

*A hungry man cannot perform service,
take back this rosary of thine.
I ask only for the dust of the saint's feet ;
since I owe not any man.
O God, how shall I fare
if I am shamed before thee?
If thou give me not (of thine own accord),
I will beg for it.
I beg for two seers of flour,
a quarter of a seer of clarified butter with salt ;
I beg for half a seer of dal,
which will feed me twice a day.*

*I beg for a bed with four legs to it,
 a pillow and a mattress;
 I beg for a quilt over me;
 and then thy slave will cheerfully serve thee.
 I have never been covetous;
 thy name alone becometh me.
 Saith Kabir, my soul is happy;
 and when my soul is happy then I recognize God.*

These verses illustrate Kabir's practical approach to life. Unlike ascetics of the orthodox tradition, he did not give up the work of his livelihood to devote himself to the exclusive pursuit of religion. As Underhill (1945: XIII-XIV) has rightly pointed out:

... he (Kabir) knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart. Observing mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family—a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to conceal or explain—and it was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love. Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation; pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the *yogi* who 'has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat', and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded by love, joy, and beauty—the proper theatre of man's quest—in order to find that One Reality who has spread His form of love throughout *all* the world.

Kabir lived in an age and at a place where the Hindu logicians (*Naiyayikas*) were engaged in hair-splitting interpretations of the *shastras*. The *shastrarthas* of the *pandits* did not impress him, but if he were to establish his radical ideas he could not have possibly avoided the language of logic in answering the complex theological questions put to him by his opponents. In his condemnation of the prevailing customs supported by brahmans he used the weapon of satire, plain logic, and traditional explanations which could easily attract the unsophisticated. Sometimes he seems to have no restraint on his language while asserting his point of view:

*If birth from a brahman mother makes you a brahman,
 why did you not come by another way?*

Or again,

*The brahmans of this age are objects of ridicule;
 give not to them alms;
 They with their families will go to hell,
 and take with them their employers (those who give them fees or alms).*

*If union with God be obtained by going about naked
 All beasts of the forest shall be saved!
 What mattereth it whether man goeth naked or weareth a deer skin,
 If he recognizes not God in his heart.
 If perfection be obtained by shaving his head,
 Why should not sheep obtain salvation?
 If, O brethren, the continent man is shaved,
 why should not a eunuch obtain the supreme reward?*

Both in perception and presentation Kabir emphasized on the wisdom gained through personal experience—the oral tradition; he used the incidents of common life to explain his ideas. Knowing well the consequences of the *indrajai* of the textual knowledge which the *pandits* and the *maulavis* used in bewitching the masses, he denounced booklore and exalted the importance of the guru with whom one may communicate intimately through the words of the mouth. Describing the importance of the guru he says:

*The guru is the potter and the disciple the vessel;
 he removes all defects.
 He first places the support (sahara) within,
 then with blows he fashions the vessel into shape.
 Regard your guru as a knife grinder,
 let him grind your heart;
 Cleansing the heart from all impurity,
 let him make it bright as a mirror.*

As a poet of the non-literates Kabir composed such songs as may easily be remembered and sung by the folk surrounding him. To those who are fond of grammatical accuracy or what is called literary style, the colloquial and unpolished poetry of Kabir may not be impressive. But in every village, in every home and, on all such occasions when abstract logic fails, the words of Kabir are on the lips of the non-literates all over North-India. For, Kabir was after all a people's poet.

The Matchless Kabir

To sum up, Kabir's contribution to the tradition of non-conformity in Indian civilization we may list as follows:

- (1) Outright rejection of the caste system, the practice of untouchability and all social distinctions;
- (2) denial of brahmans and the *mullas* as the ones having special religious functions or as being specially holy;
- (3) refusal to recognize the authority of the six Hindu schools of philosophy;
- (4) denunciation of booklore that promotes pride;

(5) disapproval of sectarian distinctions between the Hindus and the Muslims—no preference for either religion; and

(6) condemnation of such beliefs and practices as idolatry, polytheism, mythology of divine incarnation, fasting, ceremonial purification, pilgrimage, asceticism and severe austerities, circumcision, prayer in a mosque, and all externals of religion.

In his positive approach to tradition Kabir emphasized the unity of men, truth, non-violence, tolerance, love, compassion, and belief in one God.

But these negative and positive approaches to tradition were no speciality of Kabir. Many of his predecessors and successors have said the same thing again and again. What makes Kabir different from all others is his mode of protest—the language and the logic of condemnation. Our image of Kabir is not the same as that of Mahavir, or the Buddha, or Chaitanya, or Jnaneshwara, or Gandhi. Kabir preached tolerance, when he says :

*For him who sows thorns for thee,
do thou sow flowers;
For thee the harvest will be flowers;
but for him sharp pains.*

From these verses we do not however get the same feeling as we get from Christ's saying:

That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and prosecute you. (Matthew: V. 39, 44)

In the lines of Kabir the idea of vengeance is implicit, for the offender will be punished. Indeed, such saintly traits as a compassion, tenderness, and fervent love are not generally attributed to Kabir's intrinsic character. Kabir appears as a rugged poet, earnest and vigorous in his message, exposing with merciless severity the weaknesses of both the Hindus and the Muslims. As has been quoted earlier, he even used invectives in his denunciation of brahmans and *mullas*. But must we not forget that Kabir was after all a non-literate poet who used the language of his heart which may sometimes appear rugged and unsophisticated, particularly to those who are not used to hearing plain truth. Kabir's attack on tradition was direct and frontal; he spoke fearlessly and he never said anything in a roundabout way merely to please his hearers. In the cultural language of Banaras he was *akkhara* and *phakkar*.

Looking at Kabir's personal life as that of one who is disowned both by the Hindus and by the Muslims and lives in abject poverty, we are not surprised at the ruggedness of his expressions. His voice was that of a downtrodden who rebels openly against social inequalities and injustices, and seeks social re-ordering. His was the insider's view of the commoners' expectations of social

change, and hence he spoke differently from the soft clamourings of literate intellectuals, and saints coming from the privileged class and caste. It is in this context of the non-literate movement in Indian tradition that Kabir is matchless. We believe he occupies the highest place among the non-conformists in Indian tradition. And from the fact that amongst his more than one million followers, the Sudras are most numerous we can easily say that his influence on the non-literates was not only great in his life-time but has continued to the present day.

The Panth of Kabir

It has already been pointed out that Kabir did not try to build up a new system, did not give up the life of a householder in favour of asceticism, and did not approve the authority of the scriptural booklore. But, from what I have so far gathered, it appears to me that the followers of Kabir have undone everything which Kabir did in building up a non-literate cultural tradition.

One does not know how many disciples Kabir made during his life-time; many persons must have been influenced by his message, but there is no evidence that Kabir organized a sect or formally initiated disciples. The sect which is now known as Kabirpanth seems to have come much later. Nevertheless it is true that a large number of sects owe their origin to the ideas which Kabir promulgated. Of these sects, the most important ones are the Sikhs whose founder Nanak (1469-1538) was greatly influenced by Kabir, a large number of verses of Kabir are included in the *Adi-Grantha*; the Dadupanth whose founder Dadu (1544-1603), a cotton carder by caste, followed the teachings of Kabir; the Laldasi whose founder was Lal Das (—1648) a member of the Meo tribe of Rajasthan, was greatly influenced by Kabir; the Baba Lalis whose founder was one Baba Lal (—1649) and which survives in parts of Gujarat; the Sadhs whose founder Birbhan (—1543) drew most of his ideas from Kabir; the Dharnidasi whose founder was one Dharni Das (—1656), a Kayastha of Chhapara in Bihar; the Charandasi whose founder Charan Das (1703-1782) was a Baniya by caste and whose teachings are very much the same as that of Kabir; the Shiva-Narayanis which was founded in 1734 by a Rajput named Shiva Narayana; the Garibdasis whose founder was Garib Das (1717-1782), and whose scripture *Guru Grantha Sahib* contains twentyfour thousand verses out of which seven thousands are taken from Kabir; the Ram-sanehis whose founder Ramcharan (1718) lived in Rajasthan; the Paltupanthis whose founder Paltu Sahib lived sometime in the eighteenth century in the Azamgarh district in Uttar Pradesh; the Satnamis which was founded before the middle of the seventeenth century by Jagjivan Das and subsequently reorganized by Ghazi Das; the Prannathis whose founder lived in Panna in Madhya Pradesh during the early eighteenth century; and the Radhaswami Satsanga which was founded by Tulsi Ram (1818-1878) of Agra in U.P. All these sects owe to Kabir; in some cases the influence is direct, in others indirect. Though they differ in many important details they all have

something in common—the need of a Guru, denunciation of idolatrous practices, and preachings in the vernacular.

The modern Kabirpanthis recognize two main divisions (there are also several minor sections) of their *panth*—one with its headquarters at the Kabir Chaura matha in Banaras, and the second founded by Dharam Das in the Chhatisgarh districts in Madhya Pradesh. The Kabirchaura matha, called *mulagaddi*, is headed by an ascetic *bairagi*. The Dharmadasi section is called *banshagaddi*. The *mahantha* of this section has to marry, and ideally live with his wife till a son is born; after the son is born the wife should become a *bairagi*. Traditionally, the *mahantha* should also hold the office for 25 years and 20 days and is then succeeded by his son. But these ideal situations are not always followed now in actual practice.

From what has so far been gathered the historical Kabir has been mythicized by his followers and numerous legends are now in existence with regard to his birth, life, and death:

Kabir was born of a virgin brahman widow whom the great saint Ramananda without knowing that she was a widow wished her the blessing of a son.

Kabir descended on a lotus flower, and was picked up by Niru and Nima, the Muslim weavers, who in previous birth had been brahmans and whom Kabir had then promised to be born in their house to deliver them from transmigration.

At the instance of the *Qazi*, Niru tried to destroy the child Kabir, but he was terrified to see that though he plunged a knife into him there was not a drop of blood and the child was unharmed.

One day a cow was sacrificed; Kabir reproached the *Qazi* for his sin in killing a cow and having raised it to life again disappeared.

Sikander Lodi gave orders for Kabir to be bound with chains and put into a boat full of stones which was then pushed out into the river Ganges and sunk, but a moment later Kabir was seen seated on a deerskin on the water and floating up against stream.

Kabir was then bound in a basket and the fire heaped round him, then he was brought to be trodden under foot by an infuriated elephant and a lion. But all these failed, and then the Emperor prostrated himself at the feet of Kabir and asked pardon for his fault.

When Kabir was dying a dispute occurred between his Hindu and Muslim followers as to whether he should be cremated or buried. Kabir asked them not to quarrel and wait for the event to follow. He laid down and spread the sheets over himself and told the disciples to close the door and leave him inside, which they did. After a few minutes a sound came from the room, and when the room was opened nothing was to be seen except two sheets and some

flowers in them. One sheet and half the flowers the Hindus took, and the other sheet and the remainder of the flowers were taken by Muslims; and both performed the ceremony of disposal according to their respective custom.

These myths and legends are transmitted orally among the non-literate followers of Kabir. Some of these have now been published by the Kabirpanthi scholars.

Although Kabir transmitted his message orally and denounced booklore, his followers could not help writing down his poems soon after his death. A collection of his poems, called *Bijak* (which means, essence or seed), has come down in various editions which differ considerably one from the other; it is difficult to say what the true text of the *Bijak* is. Perhaps, the first edition of the *Bijak* was printed at Banaras in 1868. Besides the *Bijak*, which is the sacred scripture of all the Kabirpanthis, there is a vast sectarian literature on Kabir—both published and unpublished. To give the idea of what Kabirpanthi literature is like, the book *Kabir Mansoor* may be referred to by way of example. This book was written by Sadhu Parmananda, a Kabirpanthi of Ferozepur and published in Urdu in 1857. It was subsequently translated into Hindi by Makanji Kuber of Bombay, a painter by profession and a Kabirpanthi by religion, and published in 1903 by the Venkateshwar Steam Press, Bombay. The book contains 1493 pages (texts) and a large number of line drawings of the various Hindu gods and goddesses. It is a sort of anthology of the Brahminic, Christian, and Islamic scriptures. The major portion of the book is however devoted to the description of Hindu mythology, and is written in the style of the *Puranas*. The book describes Kabir as having appeared in all the four yugas—in the Satyayuga Kabir was known as Satya Sukritajee, in the Tretayuga he was famous as Munindrajee, in the Dwapara he was called Karunamaya, and in the Kaliyuga he appeared no less than fourteen times as Musa, Daud, Suleman, Issa, Mohammad and several others. Similarly, in the Tretayuga he is described as having taught Ramachandra the techniques of *yinga* and preached to Ravana of Lanka; in the Dwapara, Krishna requested Kabir to come to his rescue in the Kaliyuga when he will take the form of Jagannath, and the god of the sea will threaten to destroy his temple at the sea-shore in Puri. Kabir is described also as the author of the *Svasamieda* from which, according to the *Kabir Mansoor*, the four Vedas have originated. The book describes the various *leelas* or the miracle-plays of Kabir and extols him as the *Parabrahman*.

Thus in the processes of myth-making the men of letters have tried to link Kabir with the Pauranic Hindu gods and goddesses and have made him an *avatar*—a thing which Kabir himself denounced all his life. The manner in which the book *Kabir Mansoor* shows the affinity of Kabir with Islam and Christianity is also the vulgarization of the Kabir's doctrine of making no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, Rama and Raheem. The mythologists may have good reasons for making Kabir a mythical figure and such

myths might also easily catch the imagination of the non-literate masses, but thereby the historicity of Kabir is destroyed and the social aims with which Kabir began his movement obviously get distorted and wavered.

Perhaps the Kabirpanthi men of letters have now realized that the kind of mythomania which books like *Kabir Mansoor* want to perpetuate no longer appeals to the masses, much less to the literate devotees. Hence, the recent trend to systematize and philosophize the doctrines of Kabir and to establish him as equal in position to the Vaishnava *acharyas*. In Varanasi (Banaras) practically all the Kabirpanthi students in Sanskrit *panthasalas* and at the Varanaseya Sanskrit University are studying Vedanta. It is their hope that 'if they could prove that the doctrines of Kabir in its pristine purity are the essence of the Vedantic system, then their *pantha* will spread rapidly among the orthodox Hindus.' Some of them hold that the teachings of Kabir have close parallels in the Vedas and the Upanishads.

To make the doctrines of Kabir acceptable to the orthodox Brahman philosophers the modern Kabirpanthis are publishing their works also in Sanskrit, such as the *Dasmatra*, the *Kabirsatakam*, and the *Brahmanirufana*. The *Bijak* has also been translated into Sanskrit.

In their religious observance, rites and ceremonies (particularly the *Chauka*-rites), modern Kabirpanthis do not seem to be different from the orthodox Vaishnavites. They are guided by the Brahminic *paddhaties*: they worship the idol of Kabir, and wear sacred-thread, sandalwood paste and a rosary made from the *tulsi* plant or *Bela*-wood. In the Kabirchaura matha in Varanasi there is a regular discourse on the *Gita* and the *Puranas*. A brahman Kathabachaha from Bihar is appointed for this purpose. In some of the Kabirpanth-maths the devotees visiting during the day receive three spoonfuls of *charnamrita* together with three leaves of the *tulsi* plant which is sacred to Vishnu. When Kabir spoke of Rama, he did not mean the incarnation of Vishnu; his Rama was the Supreme Being. The Kabirpanthis have not given up the caste system. Even among their ascetics the influence of caste is easily noticeable; the concept of purity and pollution is also deeply rooted in their social interaction. At the time of *bhandara* (community feast) the ascetics from the so-called untouchable castes announce *on their own* that they will sit in a separate row (or what they call *hamari panghati alag lagi*).

We have not yet met any Muslim Kabirpanthi anywhere in Bihar and eastern U P, not even in Banaras, the hometown of Kabir. The Hindu Kabirpanthis do not feel happy on the question whether Kabir was a Muslim weaver. Several pamphlets published from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh make Kabir the legitimate son of a brahman couple. Although today among the followers of Kabir the Sudras—Ahirs, Kunbis, Dhanukas, Manjhis, Dusadhas, Suris, and Telis—are most numerous, the brahmans are given great importance in the *pantha*. Some of the Kabirpanthi-maths in eastern U P are headed by brahmans.

These illustrations clearly show that the modern Kabirpanthis are becoming brahman-minded, a phenomenon which might be called *virprachitti*.

Although, we wish to avoid generalization at this stage of this work which has yet to be completed, in conclusion we may observe that in the course of five hundred years the message of Kabir has been thoroughly and systematically distorted by men of letters. What has been presented in this essay is a case history of how a non-literate movement deviates from its cultural goal as soon as it changes its mode of transmission. In other words, when a non-literate group concedes to the Brahminic scriptural lore the *virprachitti* syndrome becomes operative. In brief, it seems the Kabir movement is no longer a movement, it has become *pravaha patita*—fallen into the mainstream of Brahminism. In other words, it has turned into a system against which Kabir had fought all his life.

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Discussion

on Paper by Baidyanath Saraswati

N SANJEEVI/ Since the followers of Kabir did not take to his teachings, they failed the founder. Why then, are many myths about Kabir being discussed?

M S A RAO/ Myths are not derogatory; they have a value in verse. In both Kabir and Veerasaiva's movement, the common feature which recurs repeatedly, aside from the aim to reform the religion, is to bring about upward social mobility among its followers, and bring in the benefits of a rise in social hierarchy.

C PARVATHAMMA/ If Kabir was a non-literate, who compiled his sayings? Are not distortions inherent in his sayings, when written by others?

T K OOMMEN/ If protest implies collective mobilization, as I feel it does, then, did Kabir really make an attempt at collective mobilization? Or, was he only giving shape to certain ideas which were existing? Unless ideas are operationalized for collective mobilization, it is doubtful if we can call it (Kabir's) a protest movement. The time-lag between Kabir's life and the crystallization of ideas has to be borne in mind. We must distinguish between the sources and causes of movements, such as an idea system, and the consequences which lead to a social movement. What are the structural prerequisites for the emergence of a protest movement? That is, how were the ideas turned into a protest movement? It is in this context that we must investigate the kind of followers Kabir had, for this will help in the boundary demarcation of a movement and thereby to identify it. This demarcation helps us to see the hierarchy of participants, both those who form the core of a movement and those who are on the periphery. Therefore, unless this boundary between Kabir and his followers is identifiable, we cannot call it a movement, or alternatively we must seek other criteria for calling it one.

LEELA DUBE/ First, a point may be made about the legitimizing role of myths. This is a language of assertion, which means that the followers of

Kabir are attempting to convey the message through myths; namely, that Kabir was no less a God than those of the Hindu pantheon, and was even superior because he came to the help of Krishna. In this way Kabir's message has relevance, especially in raising their self-image.

Second, both in the case of Kabirpanthis and Veerasaivas, we see that not only has religion an effect on life-styles and attitudes of the followers, but even the aspiring groups have used the 'new' religion to establish their separate identity for the promotion of self-interest. This process is also one of the ways to explain how movements become less dynamic.

DEVAHUTI/ Indian society is considered to have a capacity for change, but the evolutionary changes in a particular direction are not easily perceptible, although they are indeed there. For instance, changes in the direction of the weakening of the power of caste, or of the brahman, occurring over the centuries. But alongside, there exists the idolization of knowledge which, to start with, gave rise to the high position of the brahmins. It is perhaps for this reason that the literate and the intellectuals are expected to give a lead in different situations. Perhaps, that is why we sometimes feel guilty today for not having played our part in nation-building in the last quarter of a century and more. Today, the intellectuals—the brahmins—are still idolized in our midst, but as a caste category the brahmins are not as important as they were earlier. In the past, in this light, we may think of a whole line of leaders from the Buddha to Kabir, to Basava to Gandhi who have given a lead. Hence, a pessimistic view of things (as Sanjeevi and Parvathamma have taken) is not necessary.

K. J. SHAH/ Since Kabir was dealing with both brahmins and *mullas*, in what way was the movement different from Veerasaivism? This is in the sense of how did the society react in terms of both powerful brahmins and powerful *mullas*, who might have tried to hinder the thought and activity of Kabir? If this was so, did it make any difference to the later development of the followers of Kabir, in terms of caste, etc.? If the followers rejected the caste system, it means that most of the followers of Kabir were appealing against the brahman as well as the *mulla*. This is different to the case of Veerasaivism, which was restricted to a kind of change which one might or might not call conversion, but it remained very much in the mainstream that was not altogether rejected. In the case of Kabir, the opposition is both to the brahman and to the *mulla*; to take steps against the establishment. This is why dissent is not so distinct, because it is unlike the movement of Christianity where the change is from one religion to another. Now a comparative study of the causes and the later consequences of all these movements would once again show that these movements were all probably related to religion.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Was there a philosophy of Kabir?

RESPONSE

B N SARASWATI/ There was no philosophy of Kabir, but there were philosophic contents in Kabir's sayings, which may be extracted from the Kabir-panthis, and their explanations of Kabir's works. This is why it is difficult to place him either as a *Nirgun brahman* or *Sagun brahman*, or in any other system of Hindu philosophy. Of course, in writing down the sayings of Kabir, there have been distortions. But we do not have to take myths at their face value, for they are very important in sociological analysis when examined deeply. The myths which are now perpetuated about Kabir are distortions, specially in relation to the historicity of Kabir. I used 'myths' in this sense.

It is not easy to really identify the movement in terms of collective mobilization, and to state it as dissent or protest. This is specially difficult because the idea of a sect in South India is very different to the one prevalent in North India. In South India, sectarian boundaries are clear-cut, and function as endogamous groups. This is not so in North India where, for instance, a Shaivite can marry a Vaishnava. Therefore, among Kabir's followers, these boundary lines are not very clear. But these distinctions can be marked amongst the ascetics or the specialists in religion, in terms of sects.

C Parvathamma

Veerasaivism—a Saivite Sectarian Movement of Protest and Reform in Karnataka

SAIVISM IS ONE OF THE OLDEST RELIGIONS IN INDIA, BUT VEERASAIVAS CLAIM exception and believe that Veerasaivism is also as old as Brahminical Hinduism, if not older. In order to strengthen this view orthodox Veerasaivas give a mythical account of the existence of five Veerasaiva spiritual teachers (Pancha Acharyas) and thrones (Mutts) in all the Yugas—the Hindu time-scale of Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali—in different parts of India. In Kali-yuga, Revanasidda is said to have established a spiritual throne at Balehalli, Marulusidda at Ujjaini, both in Karnataka, Panditaradhya at Srisaila in Andhra Pradesh, Ekorama at Himavat Kedara, and Viswaradhya at Kashi, both in North India.

The time-scale and the places referred to in the myth of origin reveal, in a nutshell, how Veerasaivism is made to appear as ancient and as widespread as the Brahminical religion itself. It is implicitly suggested by this that Veerasaivism is different and somewhat opposed to Brahminical Hinduism, although it has retained Shiva—one of the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara—as the sole divine power, exclusively worshipped by Veerasaivas. However, another important aspect of the myth is centred around the claims of equality with brahmans, which is based on the one hand by the argument of being as old and widespread as the Hindu faith, and, on the other, by challenging the old faith, not accepting its hegemony. Thus has Veerasaivism protested—being quite revolutionary—against the traditional Hindu order, to form a dissent group albeit it eventually emerged as a reform movement of Hinduism in the course of its growth and spread in Karnataka. The history and growth of this sect are discussed here. In this context, it is essential to spell out briefly how and why Veerasaivism is different from orthodox Hinduism, both at the philosophical as well as the practical levels, so that the cleavages as points of departure which characterize the movement are highlighted.

Veerasaivism claims to be an ancient faith. But except for the myth regarding Mutts and Pancha Acharyas, there is little information about it until about the twelfth century AD when Basava came on the scene. Basava, and his followers, propounded the philosophy and practice of Veerasaivism, as distinct from Saivism and other Indian religious systems, and undertook systematic mass preaching. At any rate, by recognizing Shiva as the supreme diety, Veerasaivism chose to have its base within the Hindu religious frame of reference. But by condemning the Vedas and certain Vedic rites, it was anti-Brahminical and not anti-Hindu both in spirit and in practice. Some of the similarities and differences may be stated further.

Brahminical Hinduism emphasizes ritual status in terms of purity and pollution, and the maintenance of ritual purity, in contrast to pollution, is at the root of many practices even today. Further, biological processes such as birth, maturity and death cause ritual pollution necessitating a time-bound purification. And, so on. Practically every aspect of life is strictly regulated. Veerasaivism, in contrast, did not develop any elaborate rules of ritual purity and pollution. In fact, the *rites de passage* connected with birth, maturity and death have a minimal, almost negligible, kind of ritual pollution. While in other aspects outlined earlier the notions of ritual pollution prevail among the several subcastes of Veerasaivas hierarchy in fact is based on subtle ritual differences for ranking. Again, Veerasaivas in relation to other non-Veerasaiva castes, especially low castes, claim ritual superiority and thus practice untouchability like any other Brahminical Hindu castes.

When Basava came on the scene, his distinctive contribution was to firmly lay the foundation for the establishment of several Veerasaiva Mutts in Karnataka where they are mainly concentrated and in the peripheral regions of Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Basava was a Saiva brahman who as a young boy developed a dislike for the stringent rules of casteism and Vedic ritual. When his parents arranged for his Upanayana (*Yagnopavita*) ceremony, Basava refused to undergo it. He condemned the Vedas and many anomalies found in Vedic literature, and its practices such as animal sacrifice, caste rigidity, inferior status of woman, ritual purity and pollution, etc. He ran away from home and began to propound the philosophy of Veerasaivism or the 'stalwart Saivas'. Basava was able to gather a number of people around him, especially as he used the regional Kannada language for preaching. Further, as the movement was well within the Hindu fold, people were attracted to it and had little reason to distrust the pioneers. On the other hand, they were convinced of the good points in the new reform movement. While Veerasaivism recruited its followers from all castes, it converted more persons from lower castes—those who have always suffered. Unfortunately, in the process of its growth and development caste-like hierarchy with differential status has been crystallized. Today there are scores of subcastes among Veerasaivas.

Basava accepted the existence of a priestly group, the Jangams from Agamas. The Jangams are the brahmans among Veerasaivas, whose role continues even today. The temple and temple-diet—the *Lingam*—were not favoured. Instead, a personal *Lingam*—the *Ishtalinga*—is to be worn on the body of a Veerasaiva as a symbol of Shiva. There is no lower status for woman, and Veerasaiva men and women, irrespective of age and status, can wear the *Ishtalingam*, and have freedom to practise the spiritual way of life. This accounts for a good deal of liberalism in Veerasaivism. Basava further criticized the caste and occupational hierarchy and the status associated with it. All Veerasaivas are assumed to be pure, though today, in practice, the pure-impure division has crept in, succumbing to traditional practices.

In any case, devotion to work was eulogized by Basava, advocating one's finding heaven in one's work—*Kayakave Kailasa*. Consequently, since traditional notions of low and high status occupations was not encouraged by Veerasaiva preachers, it was a kind of work-devotion which was commended. Manual work, for the first time, received recognition on par with mental work. Thus 'God himself should have a vocation', constitutes a departure from Vedic ideas of occupational differences. To some extent this is translated into practice among Veerasaivas. But, today, Veerasaivas form innumerable occupational groups, such as priests, weavers, potters, barbers, oilmen, businessmen, tailors, washermen, agriculturists and many more, that are status-conscious. The idea of the dignity of labour, however, is an important contribution made by Veerasaivism. The early preachers of Veerasaivism, emphasized life on this earth and not the other worldly life. To some extent Karma and transmigration were denounced. Even the accumulation of wealth was not discouraged, provided it was used for a good cause. No wonder, some of the British administrators described Veerasaivas as 'Puritans of the East'.

Basava practised what he preached, and it is his charismatic personality which was certainly responsible in a large measure for the success of the movement. His philosophy of devotion to Shiva, the Supreme, and his insistence that the Guru, the Linga and the Jangam be considered as an inseparable trio in practice, helped to give the Jangams in the Veerasaiva Order a very exalted place. Further, there is a practical this-worldly side to Basava's charismatic personality. Basava served as Prime Minister and treasurer under Bijjala, the Jaina King, thereby receiving royal patronage from the very inception of the movement. Certainly, therefore, Basava's secular position, power, and influence had their impact on the growing faith. Basava's death is shrouded in mystery. Like all charismatic personalities Basava also met with an untimely, unnatural or supranatural ending. Bijjala and Basava fell apart. Bijjala, though a Jain, it was his duty as king, to uphold *varna-dharma*. Basava systematically undermined it in his preachings and tried to practise it by giving admittance to marriage between the issues of brahmans and untouchable converts to Veerasaivism. By then, Basava had both foes and followers, and the former got an upper hand in advising Bijjala to deal with the

situation firmly and not to allow *varṇa-saṅkara*. When the parties to wedding were severely punished by the king, by plucking out their eyes, riots followed in which rival parties claimed the assassination of Bijjala by Basava's followers, while Basava himself got united with the Supreme at Kudala Sangama.

Basava's followers continued to work for his objectives for, in the history of Veerasaivism, we come across saints and seers like Channabasava, Allama Prabhu, Siddaramma, Akkamahadevi who carried on the good work. While Basava stressed devotion, *Bhakti*, Channabasava emphasized knowledge, *Gyana*, Allama Prabhu resignation, *Vyragya*, Siddaramma action, *Karma* while Mahadeviakka stressed the devotee being the wife of Lingam—*Sharana Sati*, *Linga Pathi*.

From time to time, since the twelfth century Veerasaivism has received royal patronage—material and moral support—from several rulers of Karnataka, such as the kings of Vijayanagar, the Mysore royal family, the Lingayat rajas of Coorg, and so on. Today, the Veerasaivas constitute one of the major communities in the state, being chiefly concentrated in the north Karnataka districts of Bijapur, Dharwar, Bellary, Chitradurga, with considerable political power. The network of Veerasaiva Mutts, with heads or Swamijis, has come down from Basava's time. *Anubhava Mantap*, the Experience Centre, constituted an indispensable organization catering to educational, philosophical and ethical requirements. Learned men and women gathered at this centre and carried on discussions at different levels. The literature resulting from these discussions, today constitutes the richest source not only of information, but the philosophy and practice of Veerasaivism. The *Vachana Sahitya*, which grew in the hands of all the leading Veerasaiva preachers from the time of Basava, is a monumental collection of human experience enriched with daily experience of the practical world rather than an abstract philosophic description. For *Vachanas* are simple universal ideas expressed in the simplest possible language for the purpose of being understood in the right spirit even by illiterate men and women. 'What is that religion which does not endorse kindness?...Kindness is essential and should be shown to all living beings....Kindness is the key of all faiths', are some examples of the teachings.

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Discussion

on Paper by C Parvathamma

N SANJEEVI/ Many of the followers of Veerasaivism were fanatics. How do you explain this? While this movement was confined in the early stages to Karnataka, it spread to other areas in Tamilnadu, despite the barriers of the Kannada language and fanaticism. Therefore, comparative studies would be helpful for further information. For instance, there is a backward community of weavers called *Sangundha* which is spread throughout Tamilnadu; their chief deity is Lord Muruhar who is worshipped more than Shiva himself. But they are associated with Tamilnadu Nayyannars. Who propagated this philosophy and religion in Tamilnadu? Did Basava make an attempt?

At any rate, what are the causes of certain brahmans (such as Nanikkavasar who was a votary of the Veerasaiva school much before Basava) to dissent from orthodoxy? This has happened not only in the case of Basava but also to many saints in Tamilnadu, such as Ramanuja who attempted to convert the harijans. But what were the reasons for followers to take to this movement?

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Obviously social changes were brought about by Veerasaivism. But what was the philosophy of Basava and of Veerasaivism? Is it distinguishable from Hinduism, specially if Shiva was recognized by Veerasaivas as the supreme deity? Again, if they believed in the duality of body and soul, then, this would not be different from the earlier beliefs. Or, was it a change from the Vedic pantheistic religion to a monotheistic one, which distinguishes it from the earlier ones? But, how are we to distinguish this creed basically from the so-called orthodox one? If you say that Veerasaivism emphasizes this-worldly against the other-worldly, did this encourage the accumulation of wealth? And, does this mean that Veerasaivites were industrialisers or modernizers of modern Karnataka?

Y M PATHAN/ Is there a caste distinction of high and low, present at the moment, among Veerasaivites? Did the preachings of salvation of *Kayakave Kailasa* give rise to caste system, after Basava? Is the rise of Jangamas a cause

for the return of orthodoxy in Veerasaivism, against which Basava had so protested? Do you agree that Lingayats are agents of sanskritization?

K J SHAH/ Don't you think that the Veerasaivism movement was primarily a religious one? This is evident from the literature, for it is characterized by its mystic quality, and an attempt to raise the religious status of people. In fact, it was an attempt to raise their attitude by religious means, to life both in particular and in general, especially in the case of those classes who were agriculturalists. It sought to raise their dignity and self-respect through religion. It was, therefore, not a question of a movement which merely improved work-ethic, as suggested by some. Most of these movements were essentially religious, because we find that later on the distinctions of caste, creed, etc. return. This is because of the religious approach, and because these reformers do not make serious efforts to change the social structure as such although the religious approach includes every aspect.

PRATIBHA JAIN/ What is the role of charismatic leaders like Basava in bringing about change in movements? Why do social evils and distinctions return after a while in every movement?

T K Oommen/ This is in reference to the protest aspect of the Veersaivite movement, which was an effort to claim equality with the brahmans. However, Veerasaivism itself became an elaboration of the existing caste hierarchy. Here, two points of theoretical interest emerge. First, the nature of any social movement in a system has to be understood in a spatio-temporal context, i.e., the basic tenor of society has to be taken into account. One need not refer to all movements as religious because in Indian society the religious ethos has always been overwhelming and dominant. Therefore, it seems normal to provoke dissent or protest through religious symbolism. Second, a theory of a social movement involves a theory of social structure, without which one cannot think of a social movement, and this implies a certain amount of social mobilization. In a society of hierarchies, as in India, universal mobilization is not possible but sectoral mobilization is, and this should be emphasized. This is why there is no movement which is pan-Indian in character. All movements and social process take place under certain conditions because of the essential plurality of the social structure, and the segmentation. This is why movements are often sectoral, meaning they are insulating rather than encapsulating. Hence, castes and sect formation is a logical necessity of the inherent situation of the social structure, and it is because of this that caste groups emerge.

LEELA DUBE/ In support of what Oommen has said, even if religion means a change in the system of belief and practice, it means that there is also a change in social relationships.

As regards why even brahmans initiate a movement, this is because an evaluation of the religion was also undertaken by the brahmans themselves who were conscious of the oppressiveness of the religion; for, some brahmans themselves had suffered under the system. Examples can be given, say, from Maharashtra—Gyandeva, Sopandeo, and so on. While some of the teachings of Basava were diluted, many of these continue in the Lingayats, and this should be noted. For instance, regarding body processes, the pollution rituals relating to disabilities of the widows, or of menstruation and death are not so severe. Communication with God is direct, and still exists without the intermediary of the temple.

Y B DAMLE/ While movements are basically religious in nature as mentioned by Shah, this is because religious idioms are often adopted by a social movement. Examples of Satyashodhak Samaj may be given here. It was in favour of rationalism, secularism, stratification, and so on. But this movement gathered momentum in Kolhapur, for instance, by becoming popular in raising of questions of Vedokta—‘the problem of being initiated into Vedic rites’. Religious rites were invoked to challenge authority through symbolism, and in turn of social relations. Thus, religious goals have to be taken in the context of the social structure. However, the directions of a movement often alter due to other factors; say, the Satyashodhak Samaj was politicized later on and changes took place. When the Marathas who took over the movement from Jyotiba Phule, who was a mali, the Marathas did not want to mix with the lower castes.

M S A RAO/ The point of Shah that the origin of a movement is religious cannot be disputed. But the point that work-ethic is apart from religious-ethics needs to be modified. This is because in the classes which were converted, this work-ethic was reflected in their life, since Veerasaivites came from artisans, agricultural classes, and so on. As regards the consequence aspects of a movement, the crystallization of class is inevitable. But this is simplifying matters too much, for it ignores the social ethics and modernization which Veerasaivites did bring about, such as the occupational diversity of many classes and also the educational structure when a network of Mutts was established. This also led to a differential allocation of political power. The movement was, therefore, of a transformatory nature and involved a change in basic structures, so that the relationships of superordination and subordination between Lingayats and the others were changed.

DEVAHUTI/ Indian society has been more culture-oriented than politically-oriented. This is why political decentralization of political empires has been possible, in ancient India at least, and movements have been more concerned with culture, language, and religion.

K J SHAH/ I must re-emphasize that religion is an all-inclusive concept in India; it includes all the other aspects which have been mentioned therein.

But basically a person who has a religious zeal and mission, starts the movement taking all these factors into account, i.e., factors of social and political oppressiveness. But the improvement of social and economic status was not the main thrust. This is why a return to earlier social distinctions comes about when the religious thrust is spent. There is no fundamental dichotomy between understanding social structure and religion. Both are very necessary, but without religion it will not be possible to understand the social structure.

ARUN BALI/ It may be noted correctly that Bijjala was a Saiva, not a Jain. In P. B. Desai's book *Basaveswara and his Times* (1968), using archaeological, epigraphic and literary evidence, he has shown that the idea that Bijjala was a Jaina king is a myth; and attributes the myth to the misinterpretation of certain texts in the sixteenth century. Royal patronage was not obtained from its very inception by the Veerasaiva movement; it was only at a later stage that this happened. For instance, it was the state religion of the Wodeyars from 1539 to 1610, and of the Nayaks of Keladi, Ikkeri, or Bednur from 1550 to 1763. It also enjoyed some royal patronage under the Vijayanagar kings, and was also the religion of the Coorg kings.

P H PRABHU/ Veerasaivism as a movement of protest against Hinduism and of reform in Karnataka has similarities with perhaps *all* the dissenting movements against Hinduism throughout history. The connotation of religion and *dharma* is different. This is the reason why, in the present discussion, some participants feel that Veerasaivism must not be considered as a pure religion—by which they mean 'religion' in the Western sense and not as *dharma* in the Indian sense. The contextual aspects must be kept in mind while using these terms.

However, Veerasaivism should be considered as a socio-politico-economic movement also, for it was a protest against Hinduism's malpractices. But one must bear in mind that it is a religious movement, which for them means a *dharma* movement in its fullest sense. Of course, in early Indian thinking and action the concept of *dharma* referred to the totality of human behaviour. Likewise, the term *Hinduism* or *Hindutva* connotes a far wider spectrum of activity of the Hindu, than the term Christianity connotes for a Christian. This is why Veerasaivism offers an interesting phenomenon. 'It was anti-brahminical and not anti-Hindu both in spirit and in practice'.

While it was originally aimed at discarding several Hindu rituals and practices, hierarchical distinctions of caste and occupations, taboos against inter-marriages and inter-dining, notions and practices of pollution and purification, etc., in time it tended to lapse back gradually into the old Hindu practices and caste hierarchy. This reversion phenomenon is in several ways common to all revolting, reformatory and dissenting sects. Is there any special reason for this kind of phenomena happening again and again in relationship to Hinduism? In Hinduism, brahmins have monopolized learning, other

privileges, and prestige. Often a leader emerges from the 'aggrieved' members, who establish a dissenting *panth* or sect or a 'new' religion. But once this dissenting *panth* or religion is established, there emerges within it a small group which is craving for privileges and prestige. All this results in re-establishing the same old hierarchies of privileges and prestiges. Could this be, in social, psychological terms, because man resents seeing power and prestige in others while he craves to have them for himself, individually or collectively? Or, since the malpractices of Hinduism are not regarded as the essence and only accretions in history to it, therefore, revolting against them does not shake off the basic allegiance of the dissenters to Hinduism? If so, to that extent, the thrust of the dissenting ideology is weakened, reducing its attack to a superficial one, and not a fundamental one.

S C DUBE/ There is confusion arising from the use of the word religion, since it means different things in different situations. No Indian language has an equivalent of the term 'religion', as in the Western context. This is why the tyranny of a foreign language leads us to impose predetermined meanings, in a social context in which it is not justified. In terms of the native categories of thought, there were at least eleven meanings, according to a survey which was carried out around Delhi, attached to the term 'religion'. Hence, the argument regarding a movement being 'religious' or 'social' is an exercise in futility. Unless we are certain of the meaning of the term which we are using, there will be confusion. Religion in India includes food, sex, worship and spiritualism. It is also used in the Western sense.

SACHCHIDANANDA/ Was Veerasaivism a revitalization movement, or a reform movement? Why was royal patronage available at a later stage and not earlier ?

RESPONSE

C PARVATHAMMA/ In Veerasaivism, the prefix 'veera' means 'stalwart', but not in any military sense —such as puritan groups among Hindus, of the worshippers of Shiva as distinct from other Saivites. It is monotheistic and considers Shiva as the sole God, discarding temple worship but wearing a *lingam* around the neck. The basic assumptions of Veerasaivism, both in philosophy and practice, are vastly different from that of pantheistic/solielus polytheistic practices generally found in Hinduism. Thus, the whole Hindu conception of practices of ritual purity and pollution have little validity for Veerasaivas. The body and soul are never discussed as separate entities. In practice, a Veerasaiva does not have to face death (there is no need for death) as is understood generally, because for him death is a union with Shiva (*Shivaikya* or *Lingaiikya*), and mortuary rites or practices are not important. There is no deliverence or *nirvana* as in Hinduism and Buddhism. Because

a purposeful and useful life on earth was emphasized, a *karma* and cycle of births are absent in Veerasaivism.

In terms of economic diversity and occupations, Veerasaivas represent a very broad spectrum. For them work is heaven, and it actually elevates all kinds of occupations and puts them on par. So that the dignity of labour for the first time is emphasized and life on earth is commended. Social status may be improved by mobility, but religious status cannot be done through this means.

Veerasaivism in Tamilnadu, with its Mutts and earlier saints, their devotion to Muruhar (one of the incarnations of Shiva) and other preachings may have many common features with Veerasaivism in Karnataka. A comparative study (with proficiency in Tamil and a sociological orientation is necessary) could throw light on regional variations, since Veerasaivism in the northern and the southern parts of Karnataka does show variations, with Bijapur and the surrounding areas presenting the main focus. Considering it in spatial and temporal contexts, as it grew and spread in Karnataka, we find that it has made significant contributions to the philosophy, practice and culture of the people of the region. Veerasaivism is not a failure as a social force and isn't one even to this day.

In the beginning Veerasaivism was more than a reform movement; it was a rebellious sect and more than a revitalization movement which can be traced even today in some subcastes. Caste-like hierarchy did emerge later on, because the importance of Jangams as priests came in as part of Hindu tradition; Veerasaivism was not anti-Hindu. Converts were recruited from Hindu castes and Jangams (counterparts of brahmins), who were accepted by Basava, directly from *Saivagamas* as priests and whose role was emphasized. Pre-conversion caste consciousness, as in other religious reformist movements who depended upon converts, continued and coloured the Veerasaiva structure. But from the fact that Basava denounced the Vedas, vedic rights and other ceremonies, it is not true to say that Lingayats are agents of sanskritization.

Veerasaivism is anti-Brahminical and anti-sanskritic, as is highlighted by its domestic rituals, and other practices. (It was a socio-religious movement rather than a mere religious one.) The argument 'rise in religious status, has no meaning in the Indian context, since religion includes caste, economics, politics and other aspects of life. For example, such low caste occupations as crafts and others were legitimized. But other groups from upper caste occupations also embraced Veerasaivism. Hence, the economic diversification (across caste groups) and occupational groups because of Veerasaivism itself, considerably changed the outlook of the people. Today, this liberal secular attitude permeates the areas of power, education and culture.

Basava was a religious leader, but he cannot be considered as a totally charismatic or mystic leader as he was made out later on. However, his secular position, especially as Prime Minister and Treasurer under Bijjala (who gave

his sister in marriage to Basava) gave the material, moral and royal patronage, it enjoyed from the beginning, to the swamijis of several Mutts, which continue to be active even today. Veerasaivism did not lapse after a brief spell into the old order with the exit of Basava and the early preachers.

Freedom to practice the religious way of life is open to both the sexes in Veerasaivism, and a Lingayat woman, does not suffer from the drawback she would in Brahminical Hinduism due to biological processes. However, religious authorities in the Mutts have always discriminated against women, though earlier instances of learned women participating in philosophical discussions are there. (The *Anubhava Mantapas* and *Vachana Sahitya* testify to the role women have played.)

It is a truism to state, that given the constraints of our society, protest movements are necessarily sectoral in mobilizing followers. However, if any kind of protest movement in the course of its development has tended to wear a religious garb (specially metaphysical and mystic), it is because that is where the susceptibilities of the masses can be easily appealed to; Gandhi, and Vinoba in recent years illustrate this very well. However, whether there could be something like pure cultural orientation is doubtful, for it cannot function in a vacuum. People of different traditions and cultures interact and in this process, through different means in political, economic, religious and other aspects of life. The distinction between politics and religion is very thin. Hinduism may be considered to be a conglomeration of religions, and it has no strong centralized authority. Therefore, it contains seemingly many paradoxes and contradictions. But there are no anti-thetical contradictions. This is why contradictions and differences are resolved—unlike conflict which ushers in radical changes. In such a situation it can expand itself and throw open the doors to all ideas, or absorb the currents and cross-currents without much resistance and inhibitions. This is why there are all kinds of Hindus, even polar opposites among brahmans, extremely 'pure' classes, untouchables and so on. Although today caste-like hierarchy has crystallized among Veerasaivas, recent years have seen politicization and attempts for unification of sub-groups. It has also emerged as a pressure-group.

R O Dhan

Tribal Movements in Chotanagpur

THIS PAPER EXAMINES VARIOUS TRIBAL MOVEMENTS OF CHOTANAGPUR, WHICH were attempts to resist the encroachment of the outsiders on their ancestral land, and traditional institutions. In trying to study the history, origin, development, fruition, and termination of various movements, some concrete historical facts enable us to understand the tribal people, specially in relation to outsiders. They also focus on the basic causes of these movements, whereby insights into similar movements elsewhere may be provided. Finally, some reforms to remove the causes of despair and frustration among the tribesmen, today, in the context of understanding tribal—non-tribal relationship may be suggested in order to reduce social and cultural tensions and to create a synthesis of tribal and non-tribal cultures.

Historical background

Chotanagpur tribes have lived in villages peacefully and in freedom, in relative isolation and security, until the sixteenth century. Thereafter conditions began to change with outside influence, specially due to external conquest whereby tribal chiefs became tributaries of empires. Alien powers claiming legal ownership of the land, collected revenue from the peasants through the Raja or revenue officers who had considerable political power over the chieftains. With increasing political power, the Raja acquired economic rights over the land. The council of clan elders (*Parha* Council) and the village panchayat were superseded by the Council of Raja, composed of his followers and companions. Not only this. In order to maintain his administrative staff the Raja made gifts of land to his followers. The creation of zamindars led to the breakdown of the traditional *Bhuinhari* or *Khuntkatti* system of land tenure, and to the conversion of the *Shuinhari* or *Khuntkattidar* proprietors to tenants. Rent-receiving middlemen further reduced the cultivators to landless labourers. Finally, with the establishment of courts and the appointment of numerous administrative officers, powers of the village panchayat were to some extent transferred to the administrative courts.

Thus, the tribal people were never able to recover from the inferior economic position to a marginal subsistence-level, in which they were placed as a result of super-imposition of the zamindari system. Quite logically, therefore, insecurity and frustration led to angry protests and rebellions. This disorder from time to time was brought to the notice of the government, as 'the tribal problem'. Some efforts were made to protect tribal rights, but these efforts were half-hearted and settled nothing. Here, the attitudes and the actions of the tribal people can only be understood against a wider background of their struggle to preserve their lands under their traditional system of land tenure—*Khuntkatti*—which is unique to the tribes of Chotanagpur. They virtually do not distinguish between their land tenure system and their way of life; land is a possession but as the only real source of security, that is an integral part of community life. Land is not only a source of food but the spiritual home of the ancestors and their descendants, and the tribesmen believe that it has been granted to them by their ancestors. It is, therefore, symbolic of their exclusiveness as a community clearly distinguishable from non-tribal community in which the system of land tenure is completely different to theirs. It is apparent, then, that their social, cultural, religious beliefs—way of life—is clearly bound up with their traditional *Khuntkatti* systems. Consequently, any attack on the traditional system is a threat to their very existence as a separate tribal community. This may be further illustrated with reference to the Oraons.

Land tenure system—Traditional pattern

Among the Oraons, the ownership of farm land in each village is vested in the *Bhuinhari Khunt* (lineage). *Bhuinhars* are pioneer families who cleared the jungles, and brought it under cultivation. The land cleared by them is called the *Bhuinhari* land of their respective *Khunts* (lineages); being further subdivided into lineage segments, each of them having exclusive and permanent ownership. The land is thus held jointly by each segment of the *Bhuinhari Khunt*, under the control of its head, who is the custodian of the land and cannot sell the land. The remaining *Bhuinhari* land is public (common property of the whole village), and includes service holdings, uncultivated land, and the forest tracts within the village boundary. Areas of this public land are set apart for various purposes. However, while a minor portion of village land is owned by the *Bhuinhars*, gifts of land may be given by the *Bhuinhars* to their wives, relatives and friends, so that it often becomes the property of the recipient's lineage after three or four generations. Generally speaking these relatives received only uplands, as gifts, and in course of time they were able to make it to the lowlands by further clearance of the forest within the village boundary. The descendants of these non-*Bhuinhars*' relatives are called the *fairas* and belong to the *Praja khunt*. But any transaction of land must be made only between kinsmen and clansmen, with the consent of the lineage members and in consultation with the village panchayat. The lineage ancestors must be informed, since sacrifices are to be offered by the lineage.

Thus, in the traditional pattern, all forms of land ownership and utilization exists only within the geneological framework of the social structure. As long as a lineage existed, it never forfeited ownership of its farm land, whether its members resided in the village or elsewhere; and, cultivated it or not. Consequently, since every segment of the lineage had an exclusive right over its land and no one had an over right, all the segments were equal in structure and had equal power in its affairs. Each segment respected the land rights of the other and taking another's land was unthinkable. Hence, there were equal property rights and opportunities for holding and farming land, as well as equal social obligations towards one another. Moreover, security of land tenure was guaranteed by religious sanctions, and moral obligations were binding on all the members of the clan and this further cemented its solidarity.

Change under alien rule—Raja becomes a feudal chief

Chotanagpur maintained its independence until the beginning of Akbar's reign, and the tribes lived in relative isolation and security until the sixteenth century. But in 1585 Chotanagpur was invaded and the Raja was reduced to a tributary. The Mughals were attracted to Chotanagpur by its reputation for diamonds, and after the conquest the Governor of Bihar sent frequent detachments to Chotanagpur to collect diamonds as tribute. But as the roads were not garrisoned and the jungles impenetrable, the rulers had to be satisfied with a small tribute of two or three diamonds. However, Jehangir sought to bring Chotanagpur into complete subjection, and was not satisfied with the few diamonds and elephants, which the Raja Durjan Sain, the 46th Raja of Chotanagpur had sent to him. The region was overrun in 1616, Jehangir taking possession of its diamond-washings, and the Raja was sent to Gwalior Fort as a prisoner for twelve years. This was the first time that the Raja had come close to the outside world, and close to the Hindu kings. Eventually, Raja Durjan Sain was restored his kingdom on an annual tribute of Rs. 6,000. But in the intermediate period there had been considerable infiltration of both Hindus and Muslims into Chotanagpur. The Rajas became gradually Hinduized by marrying into the Rajput families of Panchate in Singhbhum and Manbhum, and later on with other Rajput families outside Chotanagpur. In the later half of the eighteenth century, Rajputs, Baraik, Rowtecas and brahmans who were brought in by the Rajas as a military force to defend the Raja against his neighbours and to help him control the *Purha* chiefs, became a part of the Chotanagpur socio-political fabric.

The breakdown of the Bhuihari system

Hindu warriors and brahman priests who came to the Raja's court had to be supported. The Raja assigned to many his own customary rights. But these alien assignees who were granted the supplies and services given to the Raja were not content with this. They made every effort to acquire proprietary right to land in the villages, and in the process they succeeded

in reducing the tribal proprietors to the position of tenants. Thus began the gradual growth of the power of the Raja and his zamindars,—a growth which was chiefly responsible for the agrarian trouble of the nineteenth century.

In 1765, on the grant of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to the East India Company, Chotanagpur passed to the British, but it was not till some years later that they made any efforts to occupy the country. None of the different alien governments interfered with the internal administration of Chotanagpur, which was left entirely to the Raja. Consequently, only those tribal headmen who were strong enough to resist and inspire fear were able to keep their villages. The others were entirely dispossessed and replaced by the Raja's zamindars. There were risings of the tribal community against the Raja in 1789, 1797, 1807, 1812 and 1817 to 1820, but each time the tribes were subdued and more aliens brought in.

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, out of the entire estate of Chotanagpur measuring 7052 square miles, only 96.94 square miles were in the possession of the *Bhuinhars*; 724 square miles were in *Khas* possession of the Maharaja, 1050 square miles had been given out by him or his predecessors as *khorphosh* (maintenance holding to the Raja's descendants and kinsmen); while 4480 square miles were in the possession of the jagirdars. British grants included 134 square miles and the remainder was given on leases, *mokarari* 22.5 square miles and *doami* 493 square miles.¹

The Uprisings

These various insurrections were primarily due to the illegal deprivation of the tribesmen, (their rights on land) and due to various acts of oppression and exactions by *Suds* and *Dikus* (tax collectors and police officers), and by the agents of the landlords of the British, Hindus, and to her foreign rulers.² In 1820 Hindu and Mohammeden merchants and adventurers from North Bihar and Northern India were introduced as lessees (*thikadars*) over the heads of tribal village proprietors. Thus goaded to desperation, almost the whole tribal population of Chotanagpur rose up in arms against the alien landlords in 1831-32.

On December 20, 1831, the Sonpur Mundas resolved to carry into effect the resolution made at Lanlha. By January, 1832, arrows of war were circulated throughout the country and by the middle of January, the Oraons, Hos and other Munda tribes had joined the insurgents, who decided not to leave a single foreigner alive in Chotanagpur. In every village the *Suds* of Hindus and *Dikus* or foreigners were murdered, and their houses were burnt and plundered. The British authorities were not prepared for an outbreak of such magnitude and it was not till March, 1832, that the revolt was put down.

The result of the last rebellion was an even closer and a more effective control by the British than before. The South-West Frontier Agency was established in 1834, with an increased police force maintained partly by the Company and partly by local zamindars, who continued their oppressive policies.

Justice in the courts was not available since the language was Hindi and the practitioners and police were Hindus. To improve this state of affairs the South-West Frontier Agency was abolished in 1854, and Chotanagpur was placed under a Commissioner as a non-regulation province. The registration of a part of the *Bhuinhari* land was also started in 1858, which seems to have pacified the tribesmen. When the survey was discontinued disputes again broke out, and in 1867 a petition was presented to the local government signed by 1,400 Christians. As a result the Chotanagpur Tenure Act of 1869 was passed and a special Commissioner was appointed to survey and demarcate the privileged lands of the tenants (*Bhuinhari*) and of the landlord's (*Majhhas*). The operations began in 1869 and lasted till 1880. But this failed to remedy the grievances of the tribes, because not only did it come too late, but since a large portion of the *Bhuinhari* land of the Rajas' tenure was left outside the scope of the Act, it left less than 90 square miles out of the total 7,052 square miles to be dealt with. Disputes naturally arose, involving expensive litigations in the criminal, revenue, and civil courts. The Government of Bengal, however, did not consider it necessary to undertake a thorough survey and settlement of the whole district, although this was recommended by the Commissioner. The Settlement Officer in Ranchi in 1903 wrote: 'This portion of the Munda country was left to become the sport of the Ranchi law courts and litigation generally ended in the success of the longest purse, which was not likely to be a Munda one'. The landlords seeing this, that the claims of the *Bhuinhars* had been disallowed, sought to dispossess the cultivators further and to increase the rent payable on the Raja's land.

Thus, with the failure of the Chotanagpur Tenure Act, disturbances broke out again in 1889-1890 led by *Sirdars* (tribal leaders). The tribesmen began to bombard Government with petitions which were called extravagant, and the *Sirdars* were called an unscrupulous and dishonest gang of cheats by the alien rulers who neither understood the passionate attachment of the people to their ancestral lands, nor the degradation of being reduced from a *Bhuinhari* to that of a mere *raiya*. Consequently, their main petition stating that they be allowed to form themselves into village communities directly under the government was found to be unreasonable and extravagant, and hence rejected.

The *Sirdar* agitation was followed by the Birsa Insurrection in 1895 and 1897, and in 1900 troops were again required to restore order. It was at last recognized by the government that the preparation of a complete Record of Rights for the whole area and abolition of both *begari* and *rukamats* was necessary. The cultivators were given some security against permanent dispossession and against the illegal enhancements of their rents by landlords and money-lenders. But those legislative measures and the Record of Rights came too late for the tribesmen and most of their land had already passed into the hands of alien people. Hence, followed the Tana Bhagat Movement and more recently the Jharkhand Movement.

The Tana Bhagat Movement was not just a religious movement. It was the product of economic pressure, oppression and deprivation of land. Similar to other tribal communities the Tana Bhagats traced all their ills and troubles to the old tribal system, which failed to safeguard their interests; for instance their gods and spirits. The remedy was thus to reform their old customs, and to find a new system which would raise their present degraded positions to such a higher level as was occupied by their fellow tribesmen who had become Hindus or Christians. Tana Bhagat was the new faith, which assured its followers that it was only through the worship of *Dharmes*, and by following certain prescribed patterns of behaviour that they would be able to fight the oppressive zamindars, money-lenders, and the new land laws. Consequently, the new movement passed through two stages. The first one was that of cleansing and purging, i.e., by destruction and expulsion of old spirits and gods which had brought nothing but misery. The second stage was that of building up and consolidating the new faith by prescribing special rules of conduct, and thereby giving definite form to the new doctrine.

The Tana Bhagats gave up worshipping the blood-thirsty spirits and deities which called for animal sacrifices, and stopped taking animal food and liquor, and gave up ploughing which meant cruelty to cows and oxen, and stopped working as labourers under the zamindars, and paying of rent for the land they did not plough any more and so on. All these actions are indicative of the true internal state of the particular tribesmen, who would not adjust to their position of social and economic inferiority and sought to stop the inevitable process by finding a new cult. Thus, the new cult provided them opportunities for release of latent hostilities and may be psychologically interpreted as an escape mechanism. But the remedy they sought in the new doctrine, a vain hope perhaps, was nevertheless real. However, even the new doctrine failed in its socio-economic and religious objectives. To keep its popularity active, it took the shape of a political movement when the Tana Bhagats joined the freedom movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1921. But even identifying themselves with the Congress party did not solve their problem, leaving them in a worse degraded position. For example, when the Indian Congress started the no-rent campaign in 1930, they immediately stopped paying rent to the government. The result was that their land was auctioned by the zamindars, reducing them to the position of landless labourers. Despite this, they remained ardent supporters of the Congress in the post-Independence period. Today, while the Tana Bhagat Land Restoration Act has been in existence for thirteen years, not all of their lands have been restored.

The history of Chotanagpur under the alien rule had been one of continuous exploitation and dispossession of the tribal people, punctuated by disorder and rebellions, until special and adequate protection was given. In order to vindicate their rights, the tribes rose from time to time in rebellion, intending only to kill and expel the Hindu and Muslim landlords, land grabbers.

and usurers. But they found themselves committed to a hopeless fight with spears and axes, bows and arrows against an armed government. Hopeless though such struggles were, they did draw attention to the grievances of the aboriginals and secured for them protection which they would not otherwise have received. But protection was afforded by a specialized system of administration so that the registration of rights in land, and special legislation prevented the transfer of land to non-tribals, and limited the rate of interest on loans. Although the Acts enacted for their benefit have been frequently circumvented, they have served as a bulwark against attacks on their rights.³ In Bihar, 'according to a statement made by the government of Bihar and Orissa in 1935, the legislature of that province has taken little interest in the backward tribes except to press for the removal of existing forms of protection; the Indian National Congress has taken no interest in them except to exploit them for political purposes; and local bodies have usually been far more anxious to provide for non-aboriginal than for aboriginal needs except in a few districts where the aboriginals themselves have effective representation on them. In this province an Indian officer is in-charge of one district where two-thirds of the population consists of aboriginals, states that 'during three years he never heard a single publicman utter a word of concern for them or refer to the necessity of local bodies taking measures for protecting their interests or assisting in their development.'⁴

Underneath these various aspects of the alien government, a powerful nationalism had been growing, which found expression from time to time in rebellions and uprisings. But the main weakness of this nationalist movement lay in the fact that the tribesmen had no official channel of expression for their grievances. Having been deprived of representation in the Government of their own country and participation in the State legislature, district councils or local boards, or even in the village panchayats, they had to resort to rebellion to make their claims heard. The government with all the political power in its own hands was able to suppress with ease the uprisings, yet did hardly anything to investigate into their living conditions, and it passed on laws to protect their interests except the Land Alienation Act of 1909 (The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act), restricting alienation of *Bhuinhari* land. In 1935 the Government of India Act provided for the partial exclusion of certain backward areas. But no special provisions were made for local government institutions in the tribal areas and few social services were provided for the tribesmen.

There had been growing dissatisfaction among the tribesmen, particularly among the educated. Continued failure of the Government to safeguard the interests of the tribesmen led to the formation of the Jharkhand Political Party, which aims at righting those wrongs under which the tribesmen suffer. Having set its objectives the Jharkhand party was created by a group of educated tribesmen under the leadership of Jaipal Singh in 1938. The party aims at the extension of democratic political rights to the tribal people.

They have drawn up a constitution and a statement of principles and objectives like any other political party. By holding annual conferences and meetings they seek to stimulate political awareness among the tribal people and to keep them united.

The Jharkhand movement promises to be a more effective means of expression of the attitudes and actions of the tribal people of Chotanagpur because this movement is well-organized. It is linked with other tribal movements in India, and its leaders are educated men who are conversant with the forms of power in the modern political scene. It provides an effective leadership for the tribal people of Chotanagpur, and the movement itself is a training in political education and in the democratic way of life for the tribesmen. However, even this movement is not free from its evils. The current lack of unity and the existence of intra-ethnic strife has weakened the organization. The result is that a few leaders have taken advantage of the situation and those who have been placed in a position of authority have virtually misused their power which could have been beneficially utilized for the welfare of the tribesmen. The irony of the situation is that these leaders have exploited their own people more than the administrators. It may be said that such behaviour is also a form of displaced aggression but it has nevertheless had the effect of undermining the establishment of ethnic solidarity which is important for the development of a social and economic movement.

Impact of Industrialization and Urbanization

Tribal society since Independence has been confronted by industrialization and urbanization which have put a heavy demand on tribal land, specially around Ranchi, for such purposes as hydroelectric schemes administration, other industries and mining, reservation and development of forests, business and other institution like schools, colleges, technical training institutes, and for residential areas. To illustrate, the following table will give an idea of the amount of tribal land acquired during the past decade by the Heavy Engineering Co.:

<i>Project</i>	<i>Area acquired in acres</i>	<i>Compensation paid in rupees</i>	<i>No. of families displaced</i>
PLANT	1,904.56	10,058,121.84	250
DAM	1,601.21	8,011,614.91	45
TOWNSHIP	1,231.01	6,037,536.91	380
TOTAL	4,736.78	24,107,237.66	675

The land acquisition department supplied the following figures for land acquisition for HEC.

Total land acquired for HEC 5,432.98 acres
 Compensation paid in rupeesRs. 3,04,100,176.77

In addition to this, 2,393.23 acres of land have been acquired for different purposes. Besides these a number of small ancillary industries are springing up around Ranchi which will again require thousands of acres of tribal land in the future. To meet the requirements of these industries Getalsud Dam is being constructed about 20 miles from Ranchi city. The total rates of compensation paid to the villages are different from village to village. Valuation was made on the quality of land in each village. Although only 31 villages have been affected by the acquisition of land for the Getalsud Dam project, yet this area comprising the valley of River Subernrekha and its tributaries was the most productive area for paddy, vegetables and fruits, and has been the abode of tribesmen for centuries. To aggravate the situation during the last two or three decades, people from outside have been increasingly congregating in the industrial and the mining towns of Chotanagapur. This leaves limited scope for the tribal people to get employment. The magnitude of the problem which alienation has created has not been noticed or realized even now by those who act as trustees of tribal welfare. Today, as the development of Ranchi proceeds, the lease and sale of tribal land is likely to increase. The sale of land has created serious problems in tribal society.

Migration and feeling of insecurity

As a result of land alienation, the ratio of land to the tribal agricultural population has gone down. There is so much pressure of population on the land that even in normal years the tribals cannot make a living during the whole year. During bad harvests, their conditions are deplorable, since they cannot purchase even coarse grain and are forced to subsist on forest produce. Moreover, as employment opportunities are also very very meagre in the rural area, they are forced to migrate to places where they can eke out a living. There have been seasonal migrations every year from November to May the following year when nearly two thirds of the young people from villages migrate to towns or to tea gardens to earn money to supplement their income. The exploitation by the local money-lender or the landlord also causes migration since land, animals, property, etc. have to be mortgaged, which the borrower is never able to redeem. Thus, once these families migrate to towns or tea gardens, the move becomes permanent because they have nothing to return to in their villages. Large-scale migration to tea-gardens or to the Andaman Islands had taken place during the zamindari period when tribals had been forcibly ejected from their land by the zamindars and money-lenders. In recent years large-scale migration has taken place due to the acquisition of land for various national projects, and failure to provide jobs to the displaced persons.

Today, a majority of tribals are without land, without homes, without money, and without employment, and on top of everything without education or technical training which will enable them to get jobs elsewhere. No wonder they feel bitter about the establishment of new industries and other

national projects. The tribal people do realize the value of economic development and technical change even if they themselves have to suffer for it. However, progress at the cost of extinction of tribesmen is certainly not desirable. Tribesmen like any other Indian community have the right to exist. The chief problem in this critical period is of developing an industrial middle class into which the tribal masses uprooted from land can be absorbed. Unless these uprooted people are provided with the means, for gaining prestige and economic security in the new urban or industrial societies, they will undoubtedly create some disturbance. Even more upsetting is the fact that rehabilitation programmes have not been chalked out and executed properly.

It is an irrefutable fact that the tribal people have been discriminated against and exploited throughout by the non-tribal section of the Indian population. The present day relationship stems from the fact that the tribal people were never able to recover from the inferior economic position in which they were placed as a result of earlier conquests. In fact, for the non-tribals the subordinate position itself appears to offer justification for further exploitation. *Diku* is the descriptive term given to these exploiters by the tribal people. It means connivance of all classes of non-tribal exploiters in exploiting the tribal people without conscience and without scruple. There is as yet little indication that the non-tribal Indians feel any obligation towards their tribal brethren, though calculated exploitation has declined to some extent in recent years. Thus, if the *Diku* attitude of the non-tribal people and the indifferent attitude of the authorities continue for long, the possibilities of future upheavals cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, there is no reason why a well-coordinated national programme of social and economic development of the tribal people cannot be introduced. The continued failure to recognize fully the nature and magnitude of the problem, such as is being created in Chotanagpur by the process of industrialization is to say the least, dangerous.

NOTES

1. *Ranchi District Gazetteer*, Govt. Press, 1917, p. 192.
2. Major Sutherland wrote in his report of the year 1832: "The hatred of the Kols seems to have been excited by the conduct of the Hindu and Mahomedan inhabitants of their country, whom they call *Sud* or foreigners, in a degree hardly inferior to that which they feel towards our police and tax-gatherers. The Mahomedans were mostly the farmers of thikadars of the villages which had been resumed by the Raja or his chiefs, or which were mortgaged to others; the original possessors rented land which was formerly their own from those farmers, etc. and the 'Routeas and Kols' bore that sort of hatred to him which the Irishman bears to the interloper who gets possession of his hut and crop. The Hindus were mostly traders and money-lenders. Long stories are told of the enormous profits made by the (tax) farmer and of the usurious interest levied by the latter (money-lender), with the impossibility of the simple Kol ever getting out of the clutches of either, backed as they were by our Police and Adalat. The vengeance which he sought and inflicted on all is but too apparent at such towns as Choreah, Chutia, Burkagarh and others of that description, where the foreigners' principal resided. The sight most humiliating to our government that I have ever witnessed, was such of the inhabitants of these places as had returned standing with their children in the midst of this scene of desolation, with occasionally an old man

or woman whose infirmities had prevented their accompanying the rest in flight, and who, by the savages who had risen to desolate their houses and ravage their fields, had been tortured or burnt to the verge of death,—all calling in one loud voice for redress of the grievances they had suffered and in reproaches on our government for having left them unprotected. They were told not in scorn, that their Raja should have protected them, and they replied significantly enough, we had a “Raja”—meaning the ancient Munda Raja. S C Roy, 1912: *The Mundas and their Country*, p. 119-120, Asia Publishing House (reprint 1970).

3. In 1935 the Government sought to give protection by a specialized system of administration. The Government of India Act 1935 provided for the partial exclusion of certain backward areas inhabited by the tribes. Under the constitution the Provincial Government were empowered to safeguard the legitimate interests of the minorities and to make regulations for the peace and good government of the partially excluded areas. Unfortunately few areas were listed for partial exclusion and much of the tribal population remained outside the partially excluded areas, and were denied the privileged status of minority. Consequently, they remained unprotected by the Governor's special responsibility for safeguarding the legitimate interests of minorities. Moreover the Act was not supported by public opinion. Political prejudices led to bitter criticism of those constitutional provisions. The Indian Legislative Assembly in February 1936 condemned exclusion after a debate, in which—“Otherwise intelligent persons declared that the excluded areas were a trick of the anthropologists to preserve the aboriginals as museum specimen for the exercise of their blessed science.” J. H. Hutton, “Primitive Tribes”, in *Modern India and the West*, Ed. L. S. S. O' Malley, pp. 417-444, 1941, Oxford University Press. Again, there were debates on exclusion in most provincial legislature, and the Congress denied that the tribes needed protection against other Indians, who were their own kith and kin. Yet the general public were indifferent to the welfare of the tribes, and regarded them as savages or barbarians outside the pale of Hinduism with no concern of theirs.
4. Government of India Act, 1935, *Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas*, p. 106.

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Discussion

on Paper by R O Dhan

S C DUBE/ Rekha Dhan has gone to the roots of the movement very significantly. She has emphasized the inadequacies of the system and economic exploitation. This should have been discussed in detail. For example, in the study of social movements in tribal areas, adequate use must be made of whatever historical material we can lay our hands on. Fortunately, for Chotanagpur, there is an abundance of such material which has not been fully utilized by scholars. Good historical studies exist for the two Kol rebellions of 1821 and 1831 and of the Santhal insurrection of 1855. Such historical material has been made use of for the study of the Birsa movement by Kumar Suresh Singh and S P Sinha. But even in the case of the Santhal insurrection and the Birsa movement, a dispassionate study based upon the wide range of historical sources available, has not been carried out. Besides historical sources we must also use oral and folk history as far as it can be coherently put together.

Rekha Dhan has attempted, in the earlier part of her paper, to discuss the inadequacy in the system, the economic deprivation, and the social injustice. She appears to be making an attempt to formulate a typology of social movements. But the paradigm is not as clear as it should have been, and most of the analyses have been at a superficial level. The question I pose is: Is there a total rejection of certain elements of the society, or, is revitalization present in this type of a movement? Surveying the scene of Chotanagpur, what is 'the tribal' there? Is she or he only a marginal tribal? This needs clarification.

Probably because there was not enough data for analysis, so far historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have not been able to offer satisfactory, typologies. For instance, there is one type where a group feels that something ancient or traditional is wrong, that it is not relevant, so that it seeks freedom from tyranny and exploitation by means of remoulding, reforming, and reshaping the tradition. The dynamics of this process requires elaborate investigation. However, when one rejects totally, is one inventing a new

religion or a new social structure? Or, are only a few elements remoulded and reinterpreted for the revitalization of a system?

It seems to me that despite lofty ambitions and noble aims, the earlier forms of exploitation—money, sex, corruption of mind, development of personality cults—creep in the movement, as it progresses. In short, elements of tradition move into the new system. Moreover, it has to be borne in mind that there is 'dissent' within a dissent movement, which either freezes the movement or brings about a dynamism to give it momentum, and helps the movement to bring about the desired change.

T K OOMMEN/ What is common to Christian and tribal groups is their marginality, if we define a movement as an effort to move from the periphery to the centre of the system. Thus, a movement is invariably an attempt on the part of a deprived category to move from the periphery of the social system to its centre. Viewed like this we can construct the following two syndromes in the Indian context:

- (1) The depressed Hindus placed at the lowest level of the hierarchy try to move to the centre of the Hindu system.
- (2) The deprived non-Hindus try to move to the centre, or, in fact, create a counter-centre or centres.

Hence, is it not important to understand whether the consequence of the movement from the periphery to the centre is the same for both the Hindu and non-Hindu groups?

C PARVATHAMMA/ (1) To what extent is tribal egalitarianism disturbed?
(2) How much of the confiscated land is in the hands of the Congress bosses?

M S A RAO/ In giving a vivid picture of the different areas of relative deprivation of the tribes in this area, Rekha Dhan has described one kind of situation and one kind of response, namely, the Tana Bhagat movement which is Hindu-oriented. But there may be two other responses, as we know. First, there was the Birsa movement which was messianic, with destruction of property in the hope of deliverance, and this may be considered as another kind of response to the state of relative deprivation. Second is the form of response to the conversion to Christianity that shields tribals from alienation to some extent, by giving education, employment opportunities, and specially a sense of security. This conversion to Christianity is an important response to a situation of relative deprivation. What is your reaction?

AMITA MALIK/ In North Eastern India, what is the role of Khasis, who are a matriarchal society, in protest and dissent movements? For instance, Ram Guidalo (and another tribe) led a rebellion. Were there no such women leaders in Chotanagpur? Again, while the tribes in the frontier areas drew

political advantage from their geographical situation, why do the tribals in the industrial belt not wish to derive advantage from their location?

N SANJEEVI/ What was the reaction of the 'Hindus' following the conversions of the tribals to Christianity?

K M GEORGE/ In assessing the nature of dissent, protest, etc. caused by Christianity in India, particularly among the tribal converts, this process may be termed as 'external dissent' attributable to the influence of Christianity specifically, as it came after the advent of the European missionaries in India. But attention may be drawn to another aspect of dissent, which is the internal dissent among Christians, particularly evident in Kerala who form nearly 25 per cent of the population of the State. There, we have Christians of all types, so that dissent and protest in this context is concerned with theological concepts, rituals and practices as well as sociological systems. A large mass of material is available both in Malayalam and English for further work, specially by experts on Church history.

SACHCHIDANANDA/ It is important to study social movements in the perspective of the social structure of the community concerned. This is because we cannot simply study social movements with respect to the activities and personalities of certain charismatic leaders. This is why it is necessary to know why particular movements occurred when they did and where they did. Here, M S A RAO's idea of relative deprivation assumes importance. It may, however, be noted that in similar circumstances two communities may face the crisis differently; while in one case there may be a rebellion, in another case it may provide a drive for Hinduization. This can be illustrated with the case of the Chero in Palamau, Bihar. The Chero was a powerful and vigorous tribe, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with an extensive empire. But gradually they lost all power and were reduced to comparative poverty. However, even faced with this crisis there was no rebellion, for they met this crisis through rapid Hinduization, and evinced a keen desire to join the mainstream. In this context it will be useful to investigate as to why some social movements were confined to particular tribes only, even though the entire area suffered from deprivation of a serious kind. The Birsa movement in Bihar spread largely in Munda areas while the Tana Bhagat Movement was largely confined to the Oraon.

Thus, it is worthwhile to look at the social movements from the broad theoretical angle to find out coherent idea systems behind each of them. On the operational level, in some cases at least, it may not be possible to put together such an idea system. For the Santhal insurrection or 'Hul' as it was called, it would be futile to look for such a system. At this stage one may think of a typology of movements. For example, while some movements have a mixed character such as the Birsa movement which was political, social,

religious and economic in content, other movements like the Kol Rebellions, the Santhal insurrection, etc. were purely non-religious in character. They had a socio-economic base, but they turned out to be largely political movements. The Sirdar movement was an elitist movement, confined largely to tribal headmen whose memoranda were drawn by Bengali lawyers in Calcutta.

In the context of social movements in Chotanagpur over a period of time it will be extremely rewarding to find out the role of Christian missionaries, and of the converts. In what ways the Church acted as a promoter of protest, or acted as a break and dissuaded its followers from joining popular social movements for the redress of their grievances or for advancing popular causes; this would be worth finding out.

Pushpa Suri

Arya Samaj Movement with Special Reference to the Punjab

THE ARYA SAMAJ TODAY BEARS THE IMPRINT OF A REACTIONARY, CONSERVATIVE and fanatic organization, though historically it has been one of the most progressive drives against the deep-rooted evils of Hinduism which it thought were indefensible even one hundred years ago—evils such as polytheism, superstition and idol worship, priestly class domination and their fiscal exactions, the caste-system, elitist education, and child marriage. It supported widow re-marriage, education for women and the masses, and opened the ever-closed doors of Hinduism to outcastes as well as the followers of other religions. At that time Christian missionaries were also focusing their attention on the corrupt practices of Hinduism, though they were acting as the handmaiden of British Imperialism. But the spread of English education, which came as a corollary to the missionary activity was also responsible for the emergence of nationalistic ideas. As a consequence, various reform movements were started by men who wanted to strengthen initially their own moorings in the established socio-religious system.

The Arya Samaj had its origin in Mool Shankar's (later to be known as Dayanand) protest against idolatry at the age of fourteen on *Shivaratri*, when the mind of this Upadidhari, orthodox, Audich-brahman¹ boy had been greatly disturbed by the tiny feet of a little mouse which had ventured to pollute the image of Mahadeva and the sacred offerings. There does not seem to be anything remarkable in his defiance of parental authority and turning away from the accepted beliefs and practices in search of *mukti* or salvation, till he started waging a relentless war against them on a societal level. But the repudiation which came in the flash of a moment must have taken years to build up. Perhaps, the troublesome questions were influenced by the *Sthana-kvasi* sect of Jain devotees who had travelled through Tankara, the birth place of Mool Shankar in the Morvi State of Kathiawar. This sect was opposed to idolatry, and had influenced the ruler as well as the prime minister of

Morvi.² He could also have been influenced by the movement of Swami Narain Satsang (founded in 1798) which was quite active in Tankara in this period. While this movement did not directly attack the caste system, it definitely stressed the importance of the proper conduct over status by birth.³ The concept of caste by merit, on the basis of *guna karma* and *svabhav*,⁴ has an express bearing on Dayanand's later thought.

The man who provided Dayanand with a line of direct action was Swami Virjanand Saraswati at Mathura. This was after a good deal of study and wanderings in search of his ideal. Virjanand, who had lost his eyesight at five from small-pox, had acquired through his prodigious memory great knowledge, which gave him an uncompromising view point. When Dayanand expressed his desire to become a disciple, the first condition he was asked to fulfil was to throw away all his modern sanskrit works into the Jamuna. Dayanand complied, and remained with Virjanand for about two and a half years, learning the difference between the *arsha* and *un-arsha* texts. The *arsha* texts were the works of great *rishis* (ascetic scholars) in the Vedic period, and possessed an unassailable authority and validity. They could be studied and interpreted with Panini's *Commentary on the Maha Bhasya*, and a proper study of *Nirukta* and *Nighantu*.⁵ The *un-arsha* texts had been written in the post-Mahabharata period. According to Virjanand these were the products of intensely prejudiced and narrow-minded men, and the study of these books had brought ruin to the cause of Dharma.⁶ Therefore, this literature was proscribed by him, and Virjanand asked Dayanand before leaving, to take a vow to work incessantly for the spread of *arsha* literature and the true knowledge of Vedas, as well as to condemn false doctrines and tenets. He said 'You shall even give up your life if necessary, in re-establishing the Vedic religion. This is my *dakshina*'.⁷ This injunction was to remain the focal point of Dayanand's teachings for the rest of his life, and the followers after him.

The question that arises at this point is, whose tradition had Virjanand been following, if such a tradition existed at all through the 1500 years of *un-arsha* doctrines? And if there was such a tradition, who was the preceptor of Virjanand? The only name worth mentioning in this context seems to be that of Swami Parmanand who initiated Virjanand in *Sannyas*. At any rate, following Virjanand's views meant the total denial of the validity of the entire body of *pauranik* literature which had been the basis of idolatry, and the emergence and re-emergence of various sects in Hinduism. Virjanand's 'contempt for these (puranas) was so absolute that he would sleep with the *Bhagwat* placed under one of the legs of his couch'.⁸ This rigid attitude of the teacher combined with the obdurate disposition which Dayanand had inherited from his father, seems to have been responsible for the narrow pedantic outlook of the Arya Samaj and its chauvinistic tendencies. For the time being however it led to a fearless advocacy of Vedic religion followed by the rejection first of Vaishnavism, then of Shaivism,⁹ and gradually of all the sects, and the allied beliefs and practices which existed within or without the fold

of Hinduism. He founded schools for the dissemination of *arsha* literature,¹⁰ he indulged in scathing condemnation of idol worship,¹¹ and corrupt practices and the undeserved exactions of temple priests. He held *Shastrarhōs* in Kashi, the stronghold of idolatrous practices to prove that idol worship was not enjoined in the Vedas. His positive hatred for idolatry is evident from his interview with Rev. J.J. Lucas. When asked whether he was prepared to be shot or concede to idolatry, he preferred to be shot. J. J. Lucas writes 'I went from the interview feeling that he was a strong man, strong and sincere in his hatred of idolatry'.

Dayanand succeeded in his efforts but was violently opposed by the orthodoxy. He became famous for his standpoint, and was invited by Debendra Nath Tagore, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, to Calcutta where he spent about four months. Whatever the motives of Debendra Nath might have been, such as to win over Dayanand for the Brahmo Samaj, it did not work, since he was not willing to compromise the authority of the Vedas with any *un-arsh* literature. However, in Calcutta, he learnt a significant lesson from Keshab Chandra Sen: that he should speak to the people in their own language. And so for North India he made Hindi the medium of his instruction.¹² This gave a broad base to his movement, and he broke off finally from the pretensions of Hindu orthodoxy and its way of thinking. He wrote his scripture, the *Satyarth Prakash*, in Hindi.¹³

Dayanand also realized that he would not be able to put his movements on a permanent footing single-handed. Thus, he conceived the idea of establishing a Samaj. He wanted to institute the Arya Samaj and a magazine *Arya Prakash* in Mathura as a tribute to Virjanand, but could not do so for the precise reason that Mathura was the centre of orthodoxy. In the meanwhile the publication of *Satyarth Prakash* had created a good deal of opposition and his efforts to organize the Arya Samaj at various places met with failure. He had been able to form some rules and regulations at Rajkot where he was able to convince the members of the local Prarthana Samaj to change its name. But after he left it was disbanded by a government order.¹⁴ The first Arya Samaj was established in Bombay with about one hundred members on January 29, 1875, and had its first meeting on April 10, 1875. The publication of *Satyarth Prakash* however, had incensed both the orthodoxy and the members of the Prarthana Samaj. This resulted in mob violence at Poona and a pamphlet war with Pandit Vishnu Shastri of the Prarthana Samaj on the question of widow remarriage.

Dayanand got an opportunity to get out of these violent controversies and opposition, to do constructive work in areas beyond the influence of either the Brahmo or the Prarthana Samaj. In December 1876 he reached Delhi where a Durbar was to be held in January 1877 in order to proclaim Queen Victoria as the Empress of India.¹⁵ He had proposed to talk to the ruling princes about his doctrines, and specially about the concept of an ideal state which was enunciated in the *Satyarth Prakash*.¹⁶ In this he failed, primarily because

of the jealousies of the Pandits who had accompanied their rajas to the Durbar. Nevertheless, he managed to convene a meeting at his residence of the leading social and religious reformers. Although he could not convince them that the Vedas were the only revealed books of knowledge, he succeeded in getting an invitation to Lahore, where he reached on April 19, 1877. This visit was to have a momentous effect on the life of the Arya Samaj.

The Arya Samaj in Punjab

Punjab was the last province to be annexed to the British Empire, and in 1866 it was incorporated into the legal system of the regulation provinces.¹⁷ Adjusting to the new government and its administration was no problem because Punjab, more than any other province of India, was used to the displacement of the old ruling class for a new one. It only meant fresh challenge to the Punjabi to learn the new language of the new ruling class in order to become prosperous. The new administration with its technological developments provided any number of opportunities, such as irrigation projects, railways and other transport facilities, post and telegraph system, etc. These areas required engineers, clerks, agricultural and business experts, doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, translators, and so on. It is here that education provided an opportunity for all kinds of social and economic advancement. In the Punjab, it was such commercial and professional classes as the Khatris and Aroras, who had served the Mughal government after learning Persian that took to learning English. The others who took to it were the Khannas, Kapurs, Chopras, Malhotras, Sahnis, Puris, Dhawans, Talwars, Batras and Kumars.¹⁸

The field of education however was the exclusive domain of Christian missionaries, which were initiated in 1834 by John C. Lawrie with the Ludhiana (American Presbyterian) Mission.¹⁹ In 1835 the first printing press was brought into Punjab by John Newton. In 1849 the missionaries moved to Lahore opening boys schools there. In 1853 they established in Amritsar and in 1854 in Ambala. These schools, now for boys and girls, were intended to be the main basis for conversions. But it was only after 1857 that the Punjabis took to English education on a largescale. In 1864 two government colleges were opened at Lahore and Delhi,²⁰—the one at Lahore being far more popular. The role that it played in the socio-economic life of the people can be ascertained from the fact that in 1882-83, the salaries of men with college education ranged from Rs. 20/- to 200/- per month, a substantial amount in those days.²¹ By 1855 it had been decided that correspondence between high officials would be in English, whereas Punjabi and Persian would be replaced by Urdu at all lower levels.²² This was responsible for giving impetus to Urdu along with English. However, while the government professed to follow a secular policy, the grants-in-aid system benefited mainly the missionary operated schools.²³

The conversions to Christianity were not too many but the aims of the missionaries were pretty high; Dalip Singh, the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was converted in 1853, Kapurthala became a stronghold of Christian education, and the first General Missionary Conference was held in Lahore. Thus, the centres of active missionary development for two decades were Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot, and in the south-east of Delhi district. In 1874 the conversion of four Sikh students created considerable agitation and bitterness, which the missionaries decided to ignore. The resistance was bound to come, and it came in the formation of various religious bodies in all the three communities of Punjab. They used the available media for their goals, such as the publication of tracts, in newspapers and magazines, and hired trained speakers to preach in the streets. These organizations rescued orphans, gave relief during famines and floods, and carried out other humanitarian tasks. The most prominent of these was the Brahmo Samaj, whose Lahore branch was founded in 1863 by the Bengalis and the Kayasths from United Provinces who had migrated to Punjab as government servants. While it was based on an extremely sophisticated religious thought and the vigorous programme of social and educational reform of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, under Debendra Nath Tagore, it discarded the theory of the infallibility of the Vedas, and, with Keshab Chandra Sen it started leaning more and more heavily towards Christianity. This made the movement unpopular in Punjab, and prepared the ground for a revitalizing movement.

At this point, when Hinduism was being incessantly attacked and held up to ridicule by the presentation of its grotesque side, Dayanand, in his lectures at Lahore, unveiled the pristine purity of the Vedic religion, of which the Hindu could feel genuinely proud. He emphasized the monotheism of the Vedas, and quoted the explicit commandment of not to adore any object in place of God,²⁴ a formless Deity pervading the universe,²⁵ proving thereby that there was no idolatry in the Vedas.²⁶ Previously, he had rejected idolatry at an intellectual level. Now, he was convinced that it was this indefensible image worship which should be rejected totally, since it was responsible for the down-grading of Hinduism in the eyes of the world. He dismissed the theory of incarnation²⁷ and quoted the *Yajurveda* to say that the unitary God is unborn.²⁸ He denounced the practice of *Shraddh*²⁹ and the expensive marriage ceremonies and other rituals evolved by the brahmans or popes³⁰ who were parasites living off society. The priestly class could be done away with, since all ceremonies could be performed fully according to the *Sanskrit vidhi* by any educated individual³¹. Everyone whether male or female, had a right to education,³² and quoted Manu³³ to state that there was equality of men and women. Thus, by a single stroke he broke these and many other shackles, taboos and prohibitions which Hinduism had professed for centuries.³⁴

He denounced the idea of putting restrictions on sea voyages, realizing that the political subjugation of India had followed the transfer of trading rights to people of alien faiths, first to the Arabs, and later to the Europeans. He

asked 'Can there be progress in the country without ruling in and trading with foreign countries and archipelagoes? There can be nothing but poverty and misery when the people do not go for trade beyond the bounds of their country.'³⁵ He squarely blamed the priestly class for handing over one of the most important sources of revenue to the foreigners. 'The popish priests think that if they teach the people and allow them to travel in foreign countries, they will become wise, and so, will not fall into the trap of their pious frauds, which will take off their honour and livelihood. They have raised difficulties in eating, drinking and living, so that they may not venture in to go to foreign countries'.³⁶

Dayanand also wanted to reassert the pride of the Hindus, by citing the achievements of their ancestors; such as the fact that the knowledge of the most recent scientific inventions (the law of gravitation, cosmology, algebra, geometry and so on) was contained in the Vedas. In his *Introduction to the Commentary on the Vedas*, Dayanand has discussed at length the questions of steamers, airships, and steam driven cars.³⁷ Again, he even attacked those aspects of Christian and Islamic scriptures which could not be very well defended by reason. Thus, he strove to prove that Hinduism—Vedism—was far superior to the proselytizing religions. Later, Lajpat Rai had very rightly observed in his *Arya Samaj* that this was done with the object of giving Hindus the leverage for the removal of burden that had been on their minds for centuries.³⁸

The Arya Samaj in Lahore had evolved a precise creed, along with its militant and aggressive ideology. In the constitution of the Arya Samaj in Bombay it was clearly stated that 'The (Arya) Samaj shall regard the Vedas alone as independently and absolutely authoritative', while all others were specified as secondary. The Vedas had been made the centre and were to be studied and worshipped in all of the Samaj schools. But in the Lahore Creed³⁹ out of the ten rules, there is only one section dealing with the Vedas, and no reference has been made about their being the only books of knowledge. It is just said that Vedas are the books of all true knowledge. This compromise is remarkable at this stage. But there may be some factors to be examined. Dayanand had lost the cooperation of Kehsab Chandra Sen in 1873 on this issue, and this was the point of controversy with the Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj. Bhola Nath Sarabai, the leader of the Prarthana Samaj, though willing to support him in his attacks on the established orthodox system, was not willing to concede Dayanand's doctrine of the infallibility of Vedas. The principle of the Prarthana Samaj was to glean and 'accept truth from whatever quarters it might come, Christian, Muhammadan or Hindu Scriptures'.⁴⁰ Dayanand did not join issue with this view, perhaps realizing that the situation in the Punjab was worth the compromise. Was this indeed the promised land? Or, was the simplification necessary to check the growing number of Christian converts? For example, in the sixth rule he

says 'the primary aim of the Arya Samaj is to do good to mankind... ', in the eighth 'ignorance ought to be dispelled and knowledge diffused'; and in the seventh 'All ought to be treated with love, justice and due regard to their merit'. With these three rules he seems to have taken the wind out of the sails of Christian missionaries. A fellow-feeling, a brotherhood, a religion of love and knowledge was being established by the 'Ten commandments'⁴¹. Hinduism was now 'elevated' to a level higher than, not equal to, Islam and Christianity, by establishing a strict monotheism providing revealed scriptures, and giving a simple precise creed to the followers in the form of the *Gayatri Mantra* which was no more the property of brahmans or even the twice-born. Lala Lajpat Rai writes 'This is surely the simplest of creeds to which no Hindu should have any difficulty in subscribing..., to keep dogma in the background, and free the principles from all controversial matter.'⁴²

It is pertinent to consider here why the Punjab and adjacent areas were fertile areas for the spread of Arya Samaj and its doctrines. First, it was not a stronghold of orthodoxy: because the impact of the brahmans on this society was not so marked as it was in the centres of Hindu culture. Second, missionary work had not succeeded any more in this area than it had in other places. It is wrong to suggest, therefore, the 'looseness' of caste restrictions was responsible for the success of the Arya Samaj.⁴³ Vidya Vachaspati attributes the Arya Samaj success in the Punjab directly to the presence of Islam which had weakened conventional Hinduism.⁴⁴ But Arya Samaj was much more dominant in the United Provinces than it was in the Punjab, having 71 per cent of the total number of this movement while the Punjab had 27 per cent of the remainder.

The year 1901 marks the first official census in which Arya Samaj was given a separate tabulation. It says, 'In the decade 1891-1900 Arya Samaj had increased very rapidly, from 38,952 in 1891 to 92,419 in 1901, 131 per cent for the entire movement, 300 per cent in the U.P. and 55 per cent in the Punjab'.⁴⁵ However, it remained an elitist movement, and was most popular in the United Provinces until well after 1911 when the *shuddhi* changed its character to a substantial degree.⁴⁶ In the United Provinces four-fifths of the Arya Samajists belonged to the twice-born castes, and 96 per cent were the upper-middle groups.⁴⁷ The situation in the Punjab was similar. 'Khattris, Aroras, Brahmans,⁴⁸ Jats, Baniyas and Rajputs are the most numerous castes in the Arya Samaj. The movement is practically confined to the educated castes, a few of the artisan and menial classes being attracted to it.'⁴⁹ The possible underlying factor could be the direct, forthright, and inexpensive nature of the creed, which was also an ideal solution of the socio-economic problems. It was not merely a 'superstructure'; it gave a definite direction and a belligerent fighting spirit to its followers which was something new to the rather vague religio-social character of Hinduism.

Of course, initially Dayanand's lectures against orthodoxy had created a sensation at Lahore when many people had thrown their idols into the Ravi.

Lala Balak Ram Khatri threw them in the bazar.⁵⁰ But a reaction to this was also bound to come, since preaching against the accepted practices of Hinduism was an affront, a disgrace and a sacrilege. Therefore, in Lahore Pandit Shradda Ram Phillauri with the help of Bhanu Dutt, Acharya of Sat Sabha⁵¹ established a society called Sanatan Dharm Rakshini Sabha.⁵² The Sanatan Dharm Sabha organized itself on the lines of Arya Samaj: with schools, newspapers and magazines, pundits who acted as *upadeshaks* (preachers), and published its own tracts. By 1901 the Sanatan Dharm Tract Society endeavoured to prove:

- (1) *that the Satyarth Prakash* and other Samaj publications were full of mistakes;
- (2) that the Samaj's interpretations of the Vedas was incorrect;
- (3) that the Arya's religion was un-Vedic, and that several of their practices were opposed to the teachings of the Vedas;
- (4) that Dayanand's followers did not believe in God, and
- (5) that the Samaj's efforts to improve the Hindus were lessening their strength and weakening their feelings of nationality and national sympathy.⁵³

By the efforts of Pandit Din Dayal Sharma such Sabhas were also formed at Delhi and Hardwar besides the Punjab. In 1896, a campaign at Mathura had resulted in a *Nigamagam Mandal*.⁵⁴ In 1900, a national conference was held at Delhi, under the presidentship of the Maharaja of Darbhanga⁵⁵ who walked barefoot while carrying a copy of the Vedas.⁵⁶ What did it imply? It seems as if the Hindu mind was defying the Vedas! Or could it be the foreboding of a synthesis between the Arya Samaj and the orthodox sections?

Shuddhi was the most revolutionary and the most controversial activity of Arya Samaj. When the Sanatan Dharm Rakshini Sabha at Lahore had demanded that Diwan Chand should expel Dayanand from his house, he was invited to stay in the kothi of Dr. Rahim Khan, and it was here that Arya Samaj of the Punjab had come into existence. Even in Amritsar Dayanand lived in the house of Mian Muhammad Jan, but the end came with the emergence of *shuddhi* as a reality. Although the *Satyarth Prakash* had been published in 1875 along with its derogatory chapter on Islam, Muslims perhaps thought that Dayanand's main object of assault was idolatry, and therefore they should not oppose him too directly. But gradually Islam became more and more of a potential enemy due to the influence of certain factors and personalities. Lekhram,⁵⁷ a brahman, born in the village of Sayidur (dist. Jhelum) had been educated at a village *madarsah*.⁵⁸ He had argued with his teachers over the question of religion and these arguments were responsible for his later animosity towards Islam. In 1880 he wrote and published *Jehad* in which he criticized Islam in disparaging terms,⁵⁹ and said 'Let us remove hatred from our hearts.... The doors of penance of your return to the fold of your former real faith are wide open to let you in...'⁶⁰ Then came the retort in *Paisa Akhbar* of July 11, 1892 that the *Jehad* was responsible for creating trouble between Hindus and Muslims. This statement was supported

by the Christian missionary paper *Nur-i-Afshan*.⁶¹ Threats of civil and criminal action were repeated by the *Tribune*.⁶² The situation was getting worse because in 1890 the Samaj, again through Lekhram had come into conflict with an aggressive Islamic sect, the Ahmadiyyas. Ahmadiya was a heterodox sect of Islam, and would anyway, have been opposed by its orthodox sections if the communal question had not arisen. Its founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad found a match in Lekh Ram, and the two set down to precipitate the differences between the two religions in irreparable terms.

The only *shuddhi* performed in the life of Dayanand was during his visit to Amritsar in 1878 when a woman who had become a Christian was reconverted.⁶³ In its zeal, Arya Samaj got a law sanctioned by the Maharaja of Kashmir, to take back to Hinduism the people who had been converted during last thirty-five years.⁶⁴ There were a few *shuddhis* here and there though the potential stage for conversions was to come later as a corollary to the political developments when Bharitiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha was formed under the Presidentship of Shradhanand on December 4, 1924. But at this point practical difficulties were almost unsurmountable. What was to be the status of the converts? Were they, or could they be incorporated in the existing caste system? Could they be granted the privileges of interdining or intermarriage? Or, as it had always been happening, were they to retain their own castes and just to be counted as Hindus in the Census Reports. This seems to be more probable because even the use of the village well was only grudgingly granted to the purified people whether they had gone through the Manu type of *Prayashchit* or the Arya Samaj ritual started in 1893.⁶⁵

At any rate, education had been the fundamental doctrine of the Arya Samaj. Literacy had gone hand in hand with the expansion of Arya Samaj. In the total number of Hindu literates in English in the Punjab in the year 1901 out of only 36,385, 25,000 belonged to the Arya Samaj.⁶⁶ The Arya Samaj attempted "to establish in the Punjab an Anglo-Vedic College and Institution which shall include a school, a college and a Boarding House as a memorial in honour of Swami Dayanand Saraswatito encourage, improve and enforce the study of Hindi literature, to provide means for giving technical education in connection with Anglo-Vedic College Institution, as far as it is not inconsistent with the proper accomplishment of the first subject".⁶⁷ This last clause was to become a point of difference between those who wanted this institution to cater to modern social and economic trends, later to be called the College Party, and those who wished to adhere strictly to Dayanand's principles, the Mahatma Party.⁶⁸ However, at this time the only purpose with which the fate of Arya Samaj was linked was the opening of this College. Moreover, it was decided to run the institution without any help of the government. This was a momentous decision, for the Arya Samajists were generally men of moderate means. There were slight differences in the social status of Khatri, Aroras, Banias, and the Jats but economically they belonged to the same group. Most of them were clerks or 'pen pushers' who

could contribute only small sums.⁶⁹ In fact, the Arya Samaj had not been able to influence the native states; only two out of thirty-four, Bahawalpur and Chamba had opted for the Samaj organizations. So, the people who were capable of giving substantial support, like the rajas, and jagirdars did not support the Samaj projects, nor did they contribute to the College fund.⁷⁰ It would have been difficult to fix a date for the opening of the College if Lala Jawala Sahai of Multan Arya Samaj had not given a donation of Rs. 8,000.⁷¹

All kinds of ways to collect money were devised by the people⁷² who worked with single-mindedness, emerging successfully. Men dedicated their lives to this cause. Hans Raj worked as honorary principal, his brother Mulk Raj shared his salary of Rs. 80/- with him to meet the family expenditure. This sacrifice assumes more importance when we see it in the context of the reports of the Indian Census of 1881 and 1891, which seem to suggest that at that time the number of remunerative posts demanding a knowledge of English, was more than the number of matriculates turned out by the various universities, and decent government jobs could be secured by any graduate, if he cared to try for them. Munshi Ram was responsible for the emergence and development of Kanya Maha Vidyalaya in Jullundur.

Dayanand has been called the emancipator of women. It is true in the sense that he gave them the right to the study and exposition of the Vedas. He wrote in the *Satyarth Prakash* that Gargi and other women were well versed in the Vedas, and Janashruti Shudra according to the Chhandogya read the Vedas with Raikyamuni. He also quoted the second verse of the Twenty-sixth Chapter of the *Rajurveda* which plainly says that all human beings have the right to read and hear the Vedas.⁷³ And in giving this right to woman he gave her every thing, the courage and the stamina to fight for her rights, and to hold her own against all kinds of opposition. He forbade child marriage⁷⁴ denounced the *purdah*, and recognized the status of women in the house.⁷⁵ Dayanand did not give the right of remarriage to men or to women.⁷⁶ He specifically said that the men and women of the sacerdotal, military and merchantile class ... should not marry again after the death of their consort.⁷⁷

In this respect, in discussing marriage, Dayanand has shown utter ignorance of human needs, emotions or relationships. For example, his injunction on the age for marriage, is when the man is 48 years and the woman 24.⁷⁸ He was also a firm believer in the *Varnashram Dharm*, which means that a man should attain the *Vanaprastha* at the age of fifty. Even if this stage is deleted and he has only to take *Sannyas*, *Brahmacharya* compensating for *Vanaprastha*, how does the man fulfil his obligations of having and rearing ten children which Dayanand allows to each pair of human beings?⁷⁹ He seems to have guaranteed a hundred years of life to all when he himself lived only for fifty-nine. He advocates *niyoga*, but when taken out of its context the whole thing looks almost ridiculous. He does not stop to reflect on the causes and conditions which might have been responsible for it in the early days of Aryan civilization. He says that when a man and a woman wish to be united by

niyoga, they should make a solemn declaration before the members of their families that they make a mutual covenant of *niyoga*, for the purpose of raising up issues, and that they will separate on the accomplishment of the object. If they continue their connection after it, they should be considered as sinners and liable to punishment by their class and government.⁸⁰ No wonder his followers did away with it and introduced widow remarriage instead. This attitude of Dayanand, of turning to the Vedas for almost everything without much reference to the changing, modern trends of the society has been, and is still responsible for the uncompromising, intolerant mood of the Arya Samaj. Today, when its entire reform programme has been taken over by the government, its status has been reduced to that of a mere sect, striving to ensure its existence only through various religious ceremonies.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. In a letter to J N Farquhar, Mrs Sinclair Stevenson who lived at Rajkot, wrote concerning this Jain influence... 'In the thirties, the father of the present Thakur Sahib was ruling. He was very devoted to a certain *Sthanakvasi* monk. The prime minister was also *Sthanakvasi*'. Farquhar, J N, *Modern Religious Movements*, Delhi, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, n. d., p. 104.
3. Kenneth W Jones, *Arya Samaj in Punjab, A Study of Social Reform and Revivalism*, 1877-1902, Microfilm thesis. No. 1. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, pp. 53-54.
4. An English translation of *Satyarth Prakash* "Light of Truth" by Dayanand Saraswati: Ed. by Durga Prasad, 1972, New Delhi, Jan Gyan Prakash, pp. 83-84.
5. Sarda, H B, *op. cit.*, p. 36; Also Bawa Chhaju Singh, *The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, Pt. I, Lahore, 1903, p. 76.
6. Sarda H B, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 39. *Dakshina* is the offering made by the disciple to the preceptor at the end of his period of study.
8. Bawa Chhaju Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.
9. Grahm Reid, *Arya Samaj and Caste Reform*, New Delhi, Microfilm thesis in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, p. 117.
10. "I established schools at Farrukhabad and Kashi for teaching the learning of the *Rishis*. On account of the deceitfulness of the teachers, these schools have not been so useful as they should have been." *Poona Lectures*, 16, p. 6. Quoted by Grahm Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
11. Ghasi Ram, 'Swami Dayanand Saraswati', in the *Dayanand Commemoration Volume*, Ed. By H B Sarda, 1933, Ajmer, p. 276.
12. Farquhar, J N, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
13. *Satyarth Prakash* is a compilation of his lectures and was written in 1874 at the suggestion of Raja Jai Kishan Dass of Aligarh (U. P.). It was published in 1875.
14. Grahm Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
15. Durga Prasad, *op. cit.*, Ch. VI. pp. 136-171.
16. Sarda, H B, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
17. Chhabra G S, *Social and Economic History of the Punjab (1849-1901)*, Jullundur, 1960, p. 325.
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20. Mehta H R, *History of the Growth and Development of Western Education in Punjab*, 1920, Punjab Government Records, Monograph No. 5, N. P. Punjab Government Printing, p. 126.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

23. Leitner, G W, *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation and in 1882*, Calcutta, 1882, pp. 47-48, Government Printing, India.
24. *Yajurveda XLQ*; *Satyarth Prakash*, ed. Durga Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308
27. *Ibid.*, p. 184
28. *Ibid.*,
29. *Ibid.*, p. 338
30. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
31. A Treatise written by Dayanand on the observance of various ceremonies.
32. Durga Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 93 *ff.* It has previously been noted that Dayanand invalidated all post-vedic literature, but he has extensively utilised the authority of Manu and other *Smritis* in order to strengthen his stand point in the *Satyarth Prakash*.
34. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, London, 1915, p. 73.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 258
36. *Ibid.*
37. Dayanand Saraswati : *Introduction to the Commentary on the Vedas*, 1925, Tr. by Pt. Ghasi Ram, 1958, Ch. XVII, p. 168., Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, U. P.
38. Lala Lajpat Rai—*The Arya Samaj*, p. 253.
39. Sarda H B, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
40. Krishna Rao Bhola Nath, *The Life of Bhola Nath Sarabhai*, p. 118. Prarthana Samaj, Ahmedabad, n. d.
41. The Ten Niyams are : (i) God is the primary cause by all true knowledge and of every thing known by its name. (ii) God is all-truth, all-knowledge, all-beatitude, incorporeal, almighty, just, merciful, unbegotten, infinite, unchangeable, without a beginning, incomparable, the support and lord of all, all-prevading, omniscient, imperishable, immortal, exempt from fear, eternal, holy and the maker of the universe. To him is worship due. (iii) The Vedas are the books of all true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of all Aryas to read them, and to instruct others in them, to hear them read, and to recite them to others. (iv) All persons should remain ever ready to accept the truth and to renounce untruth. (v) All actions ought to be performed in conformity with virtue, i.e., after due consideration of right and wrong. (vi) The primary aim of the Arya Samaj is to do good to mankind, i.e., to ameliorate the physical, spiritual and social condition of all men. (vii) All ought to be treated with love, justice and given due regard to their merits. (viii) Ignorance ought to be dispelled and knowledge diffused. (ix) No one ought to remain satisfied with his own welfare. The welfare of the individual should be regarded as included in the welfare of all. (x) In matters which affect the well-being of all, the individual should subordinate his personal likings, in matters that affect him alone, he is to enjoy freedom of action.
42. Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, p. 103.
43. Citing evidence from 1911 Census Report, and M L Darling's *Studies on the Punjab*, L S S O'Malley succinctly discerned the looseness of the Punjab Caste-structure in *Modern India and the West*, pp. 371-72. London, Oxford University Press, 1941.
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46. In 1921, Punjab surpassed U. P.
47. *The Census of India*, 1921, General Report, Vol. I p. 303, J T Morten, Calcutta, 1924.
48. These brahmans were not temple priests. Like Khatris and Aroras they had either taken to government jobs or to other professions.
49. Census of India, 1901, Vol. XVII, *The Punjab and its Feudatories and the North West Frontier Province*, Pt. I. 1902, H. A. Rose, Simla, The Government Central Printing Office, pp. 116-117.
50. Sarda H B, *op. cit.*, p. 179-180.
51. *Ibid.*, has quoted *Birader-i-Hindi* Vol. III, No. 6, pp. 182-186 to say that Pt. Bhanu Datt was a firm believer in a formless God, and condemned idol worship. But due to pressure from his family he had to join this Sabha instead of joining Dayanand. It seems that the work of Arya Samaj primarily influenced only the men folk, and the women were influenced later because of education.
52. A Sanatan Dharm Rakshini Sabha had also been formed at Calcutta in 1873, but had not been able to contribute anything. By 1890 there were a number of such organizations which intended to defend the orthodoxy, but could never get together for a concerted action.

53. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers*, published in the Punjab Sanatan Dharma Gazette, April 30, 1901, Vol. XV, p. 326.
54. 'Indian Social Reformer', May 17, 1914, pp. 435-8.
55. Farquhar, J N, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
56. *Missionary Conference Report of the Fourth Decennial Conference, Madras*, 1902, pp. 306-7, Christian Literature Society, London.
57. Ram Chandra Javed, *Arya Samaj ke Mahapurush*, Jullundhur, University Publishers, 1954, pp. 60-63.
58. Rose, *Census of Punjab*, 1901, p. 311.
59. Pt. Lekh Ram, *Jehad or the Basis of Muhammadan Religion*, 1892, p. 1.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
61. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers, published in the Punjab*, Received upto 7th Jan, 1893, Vol. VI, p. 219.
62. *The Tribune*, Aug. 24, 1892, p. 4.
63. Kenneth W Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.
64. *Arya Directory*, p. 195.
65. Grahm Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 464.
66. Rose, *Census of Punjab*, 1901, p. 269.
67. *Records of D A V College Manag Coing mmittee*, 1886-87. The society was to be designated the D A V College Trust and Managing Society, and was registered under Act XXI of 1860.
68. This party led the Gurukul movement under L Munshi Ram, later to be known as Sharddanand, and Gurudatt. The Gurukul was founded in 1902, near Hardwar, at Kangri.
69. *The Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1888, p. 2.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Records of D A V College, Lahore*, Proceedings of 1886-7.
72. *The Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1886, p. 4.
73. Durga Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 108, Also : "Since the happiness of a family depends upon the satisfaction of the mistress of the house, her dissatisfaction is the source of unhappiness and trouble to all concerned". Manu III, 62.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

V K Vashishtha

Arya Samaj Movement in Rajasthan during the Nineteenth Century

RAJASTHAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY COMPRISED OF EIGHTEEN PRINCELY states, two chiefships and the British territory of Ajmer-Merwara. While at the beginning of this century the relations between the Hindu and the Muslim communities were quite cordial,¹ Rajput rulers and their jagirdars were leading a life of indulgence and indolence. The caste system was rigidly practised, in particular reducing the position of the lower classes to that of untouchables who could not enter the temples which were open only to the upper castes—subscribing to Vaisnavism, Saivism and Saktism. But the prevalence of child marriage, polygamy, sati, female infanticide and the *pardha* also made the life of high caste women miserable. These social evils were at least not prevalent among the low castes, among whom there was flexibility of marriage and divorce rules, and where widows remarriage had mitigated to an extent the ill-effect of child marriage.

The pastoral and agricultural classes along with the other low classes, devotees of the local gods like Gogaji, Tejaji, Pabuji, Mallinathji, and Deoji,² in Rajasthan, were attracted in the fourteenth century to the new form of the *bhakti* cult which had emerged as a result of the impact of Islam, with the consequence that some of the high caste Hindus also attempted social reform. Jamboji (AD 1452-1536), a Punwar Rajput, Dadu Dayal (AD 1550-1605), a Nagar brahman (though some declare him a cobbler or a cotton spinner), Ram Charan (AD 1718-1798), a Vijaivargiya vaishya, etc., condemned idolatry, caste system and meaningless rituals, and admitted to their sects men belonging to every caste.³ Naturally, they had a few of highest caste followers, and many more from the low castes. But as a recurrent process, many social evils crept in gradually. For instance, Jamboji's followers who mainly belonged to the agriculturist class of the Jats, became a caste by themselves. They began to be called Bishnois.⁴ The vaishyas were the main followers of the Ramsnehi sect which was started by Ramcharan. The residences of the Ramsnehis were called as Ramadwaras. They began to be criticized for their

corrupt practices, as they were surrounded by women, and subsisted on the food brought by them.⁵ Again, the Varnashram system continued to regulate domestic and social lives of the Hindus, to the detriment of the low classes, and social evils among the high castes continued unabated. Thus, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, socio-religious conditions of Rajasthan were far from satisfactory, and many people were losing faith in Hinduism.

The British Government which had been in treaty-relations with the States of Rajputana since 1818, tried to abolish social evils in these States. But despite the rulers proclaiming, between 1833-1860, sati, female infanticide, witch craft, etc. as illegal, the effect was negligible. In this dismal state, Christian missionaries saw a favourable situation in Ajmer and the States of Rajputana. While the people expressed resentment against them, the rulers were indifferent to their activities.

Growth of the Arya Samaj

When Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj Movement, came to Rajasthan in June 1865, he found it not only suitable for the revival and propagation of the *Vedic Dharma*, but also for checking the growing influence of Christian missionaries. As a matter of fact, his reformist movement in Rajasthan began much before proclaiming formally the establishment of the Arya Samaj (Society of Aryas) movement in Bombay in 1875. Briefly, the Arya Samaj had aimed to restore Hinduism to its pristine purity, through social reform. It accepted the Vedas alone as Revelation, rejecting the authority of the Puranas and other sacred texts, such as the Shastras and so on. It denounced the caste system and untouchability, child marriages, the *pardha*, and restrictions on widow-remarriage since it gave women a status equal to men.

Swami Dayanand wanted the ruling aristocracy to set an example by their character and conduct to their subjects, since they were the natural leaders. He wanted them to do away with the practice of keeping courtesans, drinking, dancing parties and engaging in other frivolities like kite-flying, etc.⁶ Swami Dayanand's efforts at introducing social reforms made some headway in Rajasthan during 1865-1883. He succeeded in placing the Hindu ruling aristocracy—the rulers and the jagirdars—at the helm of the Arya Samaj Movement in the region. Thakur Ranjit Singh of Achrol, Thakur Inder Singh of Dudu, Raja Govind Singh of Baneras, Rao Bahadur Singh, the Instimardar of Masuda, Sir Pratap Singh and Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur, Maharaja Dhiraj Nahar Singh of Shahpura, etc., became his disciples. Maharana Sajjan Singh of Udaipur, who enjoyed first rank among the Hindu rulers of Hindustan, had accepted to be the President of the Paropakarni Sabha in 1883, which aimed at the propagation of the principles of the Arya Samaj throughout India. Many people—state officials, jagirdars and social reformers from Rajasthan and outside of it—in all 23 in number had become the custodians of this body. Even after the death of Swami Dayanand

state officials, rulers, jagirdars and the elite continued to swell the strength of the Arya Samaj Movement in Rajasthan. Consequently, even after the sudden demise of Swami Dayanand, the Arya Samaj Movement did not die in Rajasthan.⁷

In 1888 the Rajasthan Pratinidhi Sabha, composed of the representatives of the various regional Arya Samaj bodies, was founded with headquarters at Ajmer. After the death of Maharana Sajjan Singh, the office of the Paropakarni Sabha was also shifted to Ajmer in 1894. Maharana Fateh Singh, the successor of Sajjan Singh to the Mewar State continued to be the patron of the Paropakarni Sabha but refused to be its president. This gave a set back to the Movement for sometime. However, the leadership of the Arya Samaj movement continued to be in the hands of the ruling aristocracy. In Maharawal Raghbir Singh of Pratapgarh the Arya Samaj found a new leader (1890), and he was chosen as the vice-patron of the Paropakarni Sabha. Maharajadhiraj Mahar Singh of Shahpura was chosen as the president of the Paropakarni Sabha and his family continued to give support to the Arya Samaj Movement.

Thus, in the nineteenth century Ajmer became the headquarters of the Arya Samaj, and even now continues to be so. The Arya Samaj Movement could grow in Ajmer because the British Government gave it a free hand throughout the nineteenth century. In turn, the Rajputana and Malwa Pratinidhi Sabha reciprocated its good feelings towards the British Government by expressing heartfelt joy on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897.

As a result of this Movement, the Aryas or Arya-Samajists, became a separate entity, though in the nineteenth century they were still a microscopic minority. But the 'Aryas' spread to almost all parts of Rajasthan, and were recognized as a separate religious community in all the contemporary British reports—the Gazetteers and the Census Reports. This shows that a small but determined core of people stood for reforming Hindu society, and for social change. However, in the nineteenth century, the focus of Arya Samaj Movement was urban, for it had no following among the pastoral and agricultural classes of Rajasthan.

Arya Samaj and Social Reforms

In the nineteenth century the Arya Samaj Movement in Rajasthan was able to bring about social reforms in the region both through the agency of the British Government and the States, as well as by opening educational and welfare institutions. As a result, not only was there an awareness of social evils but also an active interest in their abolition. For example, Swami Dayanand, during his tour in the region, condemned the rigidity in the caste system which, he emphasized, was responsible for the weakening of Hindu society, thereby compelling the so-called untouchables and depressed classes to embrace Christianity and Islam in large numbers.⁸ He took a further step by making the Hindu Mers of Masuda (in Ajmer) and Merwara give

up the practice of giving their daughters to the Muslim Mers called the Meratas, who had embraced Islam during Muhammadan rule.⁹ Therefore, the programme of the *shuddhi* Movement included the work of reclaiming the untouchables and those who were converted to Islam and Christianity.

It was in the beginning of the twentieth century that the problem of untouchability was separated from the *shuddhi* Movement and the Dalitodhran Movement was started.¹⁰ After Swami Dayanand the *shuddhi* Movement gradually gained momentum in Rajasthan, and towards the end of the nineteenth century the local Arya Samaj press created public opinion against caste prejudices, favouring the *shuddhi* Movement. For instance, Minishi Samarthadan of Ajmer, in the issue of November 3, 1897, of his paper, *Rajasthan Samachar*, detailed caste prejudices, and implored that the outcastes be accepted to the Hindu fold, as it was permitted by the Shastras.¹¹

Ahead of most radical reformers of the nineteenth century,¹² the Arya Samaj Movement was the first to raise its voice against child marriage, and they tried to enforce the rule that no girl be married under 16 and no boy under 25.¹³ Swami Dayanand vehemently denounced child marriage, attacking it with all the weapons of shastric lore, elementary science, logic, argument, and sarcasm and ridicule.¹⁴ He used to call the modern Hindus pygmies, infantile weaklings, slaves, enchained by harmful and senseless customs.¹⁵ Ram Gopal, a contemporary of Swami Dayanand and a reputed barrister of Ajmer, states that while these efforts created a favourable public opinion against child marriage, there was no popular upsurge against it.¹⁶ But the British Government and the ruling aristocracy took full advantage of the climate created by the Arya Samajists, and introduced a number of social reforms in 1887-88.

The Arya Samaj Movement also started the work of encouraging and solemnizing widow remarriage. Swami Dayanand, considering motherhood as the natural function of a woman, followed the ancient rishis by allowing in certain well-defined cases the practice of *niyoga*¹⁷ to a widow desirous to be a mother. This was a very revolutionary idea, for even reformers like Govind Ranade ridiculed the *niyoga* system of the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samajists by and large themselves were sceptical about it. But during the life time of Swami Dayanand they remained silent. After his death the idea of *niyoga* was discarded,¹⁸ and the Arya Samaj, like the Brahmo Samaj, became an advocate of widow remarriage. In 1897 the Arya Samaj at Ajmer established a widow's Home on a permanent footing,¹⁹ and it was only in the beginning of the twentieth century that widow remarriage could make headway when the Vidhava Vivah Sabha of Lahore in 1915 opened five of its branches in Rajputana.²⁰ The Arya Samajists also attempted to discourage the *pardha* system²¹ by opening Stree Samaj in Ajmer and Bharatpur.²² This had the desired result, and some women stopped observing the *pardha*. Not only this, a beginning was also made in educating both girls and boys on 'national lines'. Girls' Schools (Arya Putri Pathshala) were opened by the Arya Samaj bodies of

Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bharatpur and Kota.²³ Schools for boys were opened at Ajmer, Jodhpur, Jodhpur, Sojat and Shahpura.²⁴

In 1889 the Paropkarni Sabha opened the Dayanand Orphanage at Ajmer to give shelter to waifs and strays of all castes—Ahirs, Malis, Rajputs, Brahmans, Rager, Bharbhujia, Kumhar, Luhar, etc.²⁵ The orphans were sent to the Arya Samaj schools and allowed to mix with children of higher castes.²⁶ In the orphanage they were also taught carpentry, tailoring, etc., along with moral precepts, and hymns emphasizing humanism.²⁷ Thus, the Arya Samaj schools, the Dayanand orphanage, Stree Samaj, Widows' Home, etc., played a crucial role in reforming the orthodox system, as the children and women of any Hindu community could get entry in these institutions where interdining and social mingling was possible. Consequently, the institutions established by the Arya Samaj had become symbols of social change. For example, the Dayanand Orphanage Committee gave one orphan to Babu Thakurdass in marriage to his daughter, and a girl of the orphanage was sent to Kanya Vidhyalaya, Jullundhar for higher education.²⁸

Impact of the Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj's activities with regard to social reforms had influenced the policy of the British Government and that of the States, and had created a stir among the various communities. We may deal with these briefly.

(i) Impact on the British Government and the Rajputana States

The ruler of Bundi under the spell of the Arya Samaj Movement appealed to the British Government to help prevent child marriages.²⁹ Thus on September 20, 1887, Trevor, the Commissioner of Ajmer, proclaimed in Ajmer-Merwara that marriages should be performed between men and women of equal ages. For instance, if any old man of sixty married a young girl of twelve, both of them were liable to severe punishment.³⁰ Colonel C.K.M. Walter, the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana, with the co-operation of the princes of Rajputana, called a meeting of their representatives at Ajmer from March 5 to 10, 1888. It is important to note that Kaviraj Shyamaldas of Udaipur a disciple of Swami Dayanand and secretary of the Paropkarni Sabha presided over this meeting. This conference with the aid and advice of Col. Walter framed rules for the observance of the Rajput community. For instance, amounts for marriages and funeral feasts were fixed, and it was enjoined that the boys and girls should not be married before the age of 18 and 14 respectively.³¹ Polygamy except under exceptional circumstances was prohibited, and a widower who attained the age of 45 years was generally prohibited from marrying again, but was permitted to do so in special circumstances. The system of keeping concubines and drinking liquor specially in the early years³² was discouraged. For the implementation of these regulations an organization known as the Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarni Sabha was formed in 1889 at Ajmer and its branches were opened in all the States of Rajputana.³³

Thakur Karan Singh of Jodhpur, who as a student of Mayo College, Ajmer, from 1875 to 1886 and had come under the spell of the Arya Samaj Movement, turned into a staunch Arya Samajist.³⁴ Keeping in mind Swami Dayanand's view that social reforms should permeate from the rulers to the masses, in 1893 he condemned the princes and the Rajput aristocracy for employing courtesans, organizing dancing parties at the time of marriages, and for continuing the practice of polygamy. He appealed to the princes of Rajputana to present an example of good conduct before their subjects. He also desired that the Rajput boys should be given proper education.³⁵ Thus, Sir Pratap Singh, the Regent of Jodhpur, made Arya Samaj almost a State religion. He prohibited the use of liquor among the people and placed a limit of its use among the Thakurs of the State.³⁶

The Sanatanist also felt the influence of the Arya Samaj Movement. After the establishment of the Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarni Sabha, the rulers encouraged the formation of Caste Sabhas, to introduce social reforms. The cumulative result was that by 1895-96 many communities, viz., brahmans, Mahajans, Siddhis, Kayastha etc., besides artisans and cultivators, had formed their own regulations with regard to funeral expenses and the age limit for marriages.³⁷

(ii) *Impact on the Muslims and the Christians*

The Arya Samaj Movement made quite a different impact on Muslims and Christians than on the Sanatanists. While no serious effort was made to bring back to the Hindu fold the Hindu converts to Islam, their propaganda for the *shuddhi* Movement created tensions between them and the Muslim community. The latter formed the Ajmer Muhammadan Association called the Hami-i-Association in 1889 at Ajmer,³⁸ to combat this. The Muslim press also became very vocal in advocating the cause of the Muslim community. As a result, in September 1896, Sir Pratap, the Prime Minister and the founder of the Arya Samaj at Jodhpur, was stated to be against giving employment to Muslims in the Jodhpur State.³⁹ Therefore, Sikandar Khan of Ajmer, in his Urdu paper, *Moin-ul-Hind* of March 2, 1896 complained that partiality was being shown in the State of Bikaner towards the Hindus by declaring more holidays for their festivals.⁴⁰ Whatever the facts, the relations between Hindu and Muslim communities which were cordial before the activities of the Arya Samaj in Rajputana⁴¹ did not remain so any more. In its issue of July 8, 1896, the *Rajputana Gazetteer* reported that in Alwar a mosque was turned into a temple.⁴² The *Rajputana Gazetteer* expressed annoyance against the Arya Samajists, for the relations between Muslim and Hindu communities were getting less cordial at Jodhpur.⁴³

The relations between the Christian missionaries and the Arya Samaj also could not remain very cordial as the latter continued to take measures to undermine the influence of the missionaries by preaching and opening educational institutions and orphanages. But the Arya Samajists could not prevent

the Christian missionaries from the proselytizing and educational activities. To illustrate, the Dayanand Orphanage at Ajmer proved so weak that in the famines of 1897-98 and 1899-1900 in Rajputana, Lala Lajpat Rai, the honorary secretary of the Arya Samaj Orphanage in Ferozepur, came to the rescue of waifs and strays in the famine-stricken areas.⁴⁴ His efforts were successful to the extent that during the famines missionaries like J. A. Brown and others in Rajasthan secured only a small number of the orphans for their missions.⁴⁵ Further, due to the efforts of this Arya Samajist leader,⁴⁶ the British Government made it a rule in 1901 that 'the deserted children should not be made over to persons or institutions of different religions until all efforts to find persons and institutions of their own religion willing to take charge of them have failed'.⁴⁷ This rule resulted in establishing the control of the British Government on the Dayanand Orphanage at Ajmer, and securing government aid. It is interesting to note that the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana and the Chief Commissioner of Ajmer, was made the patron of this Orphanage and no protest was made by any of the Arya Samajists against the galling British control over the Dayanand Orphanage. In fact the Dayanand Orphanage proved no match to the orphanages run by the missionaries at a number of places in Rajasthan.

Finally, while the Arya Samaj in the nineteenth century was able to build up public opinion against social evils in Rajasthan, it could not break it completely. The *Walterkrit Hitkarni Sabha* and the *Caste-Sabha* which had come into existence due to the influence of the Arya Samaj were voluntary organizations and as such it was not possible for them to enforce their regulations on the people. This resulted in the modification of the Arya Samaj's methods for bringing about social reforms. In the thirties of the twentieth century, efforts to secure legislation against social evils were also made. As a result, Har-Bilas Sarda, an Arya Samajist leader of Ajmer and then a member of the Legislative Assembly got the Child Marriage Restraint Act passed in 1929. But his efforts to secure the passage of the Hindu Widow Right of Inheritance (1930) proved a failure. However, the passage of the Arya Samaj Marriage Act in 1936, due to the efforts of the Arya Samajist leaders of the Punjab, Ghandham Gupta, gave a colour of legality to the marriages performed by the Arya Samaj. It proved very useful for performing intercaste marriages and widow remarriages. For example, in 1952, Tulsi Devi was married to Bhanwarlal of Beawar and in 1958 Ram Pyari married to Ladli Prasad.⁴⁸ Today, widow remarriages in Rajasthan have also started taking place on the individual level, and the credit for this goes to the Arya Samaj. Nevertheless, the Arya Samaj failed in shaking the foundations of the caste system, for it persists within staunch Arya Samajists themselves. This has been a dilemma that also exists in other parts of India among the Arya Samajists. It is likely that the diversion of the Arya Samajists to politics and the adoption of a dogmatic

shuddhi policy weakened the movement, causing a loss of sympathy and support among the many rulers and the British Government. Of course, many aspects of the social reform programme of the Arya Samaj were taken over by other agencies. For instance, the opening of the Harijan Seva Ashram of Nainva (in Ajmer) in 1920 with its branches in various States of Rajputana came in the way of the popularity of the Arya Samaj in this area. But this also showed the extent to which the Arya Samaj Movement was able to influence the other social reforming bodies.

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 226-28.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-29, 235, 237-39.
4. *Report on the Census of 1891—Castes of Mewar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.
5. Sarda, Har Bilas, *Life of Dayanand Saraswati*, 1946, pp. 490-91, Ajmer, Vedic Yantralaya.
6. It is stated that at Jodhpur Swami Dayanand deprecated the association of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur with the courtesan Nanijan at his very face. On being alarmed, Nanijan is said to have got Swami Dayanand poisoned as a result of which he died at Ajmer on October 30, 1883.
7. During the period from 1881 to the end of the 19th century, in all 18 Arya Samaj bodies were established in Rajasthan which functioned within the British Province of Ajmer-Merwara at Ajmer, Masuda, Beawar, Nasirabad, Pushkar, Kedral and in the towns of the States of Rajputana at Jaipur, Pawta, Bandikui, Ramgarh, Churu, Jodhpur, Sojat, Udaipur, Jhonnar, Kota, Khachariawas and Shahpura.
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36. R B Van Wart, *The Life of Lieut-General H H Sir Pratap Singh*, London, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 195.
37. *Report of the Political Administration of the Rajputana States* (hereafter abbreviated as *RAR*), 1893-94, p. 4; See also, *RAR*, 1894-95, p. 6; *RAR*, 1895-96, p. 4; *Report on the Administration of Dholpur State, 1895-96*, p. 15.
38. *Rajputana Gazettee*, 15 April 1889, *SNAI*.
39. *Azad* (Lucknow), 12 September, 1890, *SNAI*; See also, *Rajputana Gazettee*, 8 July 1896, *SNAI*.
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41. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
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Discussion

on Papers by Pushpa Suri and V K Vashishtha

PRATIBHA JAIN/ Pushpa Suri has quoted Manu in saying that equal rights were to be granted to women, but was not *Manusmriti* invalidated by Dayanand? Can we call the Arya Samaj Movement a progressive one in the wake of Dayanand's chapters on Christianity and Islam? How does one explain Dayanand's attitude towards Christianity and Islam which is obvious only from the *Satyarth Parkash*?

DEVAHUTI/ Did it not occur to the Arya Samajists that the word 'Arya' would not be particularly popular in the South, and would therefore mean fewer followers? Did the Arya Samaj in the early stages hope to get converts back from Islam?

K. J. SHAH/ How far did Arya Samaj succeed in reforming Hinduism, and preventing conversions? Did it fail because of the weakness of its leaders, or the strength of its opponents who might have been given official or unofficial support?

SACHCHIDANANDA/ Is the Arya Samaj an endogamous group? Arya Samajists in Bihar usually came from the lowest classes.

RESPONSE

PUSHPA SURI/ The question of Arya Samajists using the word 'Arya', thereby detracting its popularity in the South did not arise, because Swami Dayanand had little intentions to go to South in order to propagate the doctrines of Arya Samaj. In the initial stages, Arya Samaj did aim at preventing conversion to Christianity, but it was not directed against Islam. Later on, Islam did become its target, and this gave rise to tension between the two communities.

The Arya Samaj, to some extent, succeeded in reforming Hinduism as well as in preventing conversions, but not to a great extent. The reform of religion

in the States which had come under British rule was obvious. But the Arya Samaj has had no impact on the 34 native states in the Punjab. The tide of conversions was never too strong, though it did succeed to some extent. The conversions to Hinduism gained in momentum in the first quarter of the twentieth century under Swami Shraddanand; and, then, because it was a part of the political machinery. Arya Samaj was not an endogamous society, for in the beginning the reformists followed their various caste rules. But later on a type of a *biradari* was formed, and then the restrictions of caste were done away with and marriages started taking place between Arya Samajist families irrespective of their caste and *gotra*. It may be pointed out here that in the Punjab it remained an elitist movement, confined by and large to the higher classes. But massscale *shuddhis* in the first three decades of the twentieth century, have changed its character.

The questions asked were common for both Vashishtha and Pushpa Suri—Ed.

Y M Pathan

Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Satya Shodhak Samaj

THE RULE OF THE PESHWAS IN MAHARASHTRA CAME TO AN END IN A D 1818, when the British came to power. This was a critical period in the history of Maharashtra, specially for Marathi literature. Prior to this period, the Var-kari saint-poets were preoccupied with '*Mukti*' (i.e., spiritual salvation) for everybody, as is seen in their writings like *Abhangas* and *Padas*. This emphasis began with Shri Jnaneshwar of the thirteenth century, to be followed by Ekanath, Tukaram, Niloba and others later on. Swami Chakradhar, who established the Mahanubhav sect in the thirteenth century, also advocated spiritual salvation for all *varnas*. Ramdas, during Shivaji's rule, enunciated the philosophy of 'Maharashtra Dharma', the cause of freedom of the nation, and also stressed spiritual salvation. He established a religious sect—organization—called the Samarth Sampraday, which appointed Mahantas or sadhus in different villages of Maharashtra for propagating its teachings. The sadhus created both an urge for freedom from Muslim rule as well as a feeling of devotion for their religion. After Ramdas, this sect without any leader could not carry on with its established goals. However, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *Shaheers*—poets who wrote ballads—infused a spirit of patriotism, and people enjoyed freedom under the Maratha and Peshwa rulers. But with the last Bajirao the administration collapsed, leading eventually to British rule.

At this critical juncture, the unexpected loss of freedom caused a great deal of pessimism and despair everywhere in Maharashtra, with no way out of their predicament, for no guide or leader seemed to be in sight. At the social level orthodox brahmans continued to dominate, believing in the 'Chatur-varna' system, that led to untouchability, of shudras without any status. The brahmans' domination over other groups was chiefly due to the rites and rituals which they alone could perform. This was equally true for the peasants, for in the villages the *deshmukhs* and '*khots*' continued to rule. The poor peasants had no alternative except to submit to the will of their masters—the

rich inamdars and jagirdars of the village. The condition of women was also pitiable. They had no right to be educated, widows could not remarry, and the tradition of *Sati* also existed. In short, by and large, socio-economic exploitation was widespread.

However, with the advent of British rule, certain changes may be observed. Christian missions had established schools, whose number reached eighty in 1827. Newspapers and periodicals like *Darpan* (1832), *Digdarshan* and *Prabha-kar* (1841), helped to arouse public opinion against helplessness and ignorance. Movements initiated by such organizations as the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Theosophical Society, were very active in this 'renaissance'. However, while the British were spreading education (in 1857 universities were established in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta), the common masses were not educated as late as the year 1884. The brahmans once again took advantage of the situation. This can be seen from the following table :

CASTE BREAK-DOWN OF STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGES
OF BOMBAY IN 1884

<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Kayastha Prabhus</i>	<i>Brahmans</i>	<i>Kshatriyas</i>	<i>Trading groups</i>
Elphinstone College, Bombay	18	59	10	38
Deccan College, Poona	3	107	10	1
Free General Assembly's Inst., Bombay	—	34	1	6
St. Xavier's College, Bombay	7	15	1	5
Gujarat College, Ahmedabad	1	3	—	1
Rajaram College, Kolhapur	—	25	—	—
TOTAL	29	243	22	51

Ravinder Kumar¹ rightly points out that 'this table reveals the extent to which they (the brahmans) monopolized education, which it must be remembered, provided the only means of access to the civil service, and to independent careers in the professions'. In the Deccan College, Poona, for instance, as late as 1894 more than 97 of the students were brahmans, although these castes formed only four per cent of the total population of the Deccan. At that time, the refore, social reformers like Balshastri Jambhekar and Lokhitwadi realized the seriousness of the problem. Themselves being 'Western' educated, in showing a serious concern for educating the masses, Lokhitwadi for instance went a step further. He declared the shastras as outdated and stressed the value of modern science condemning the brahmans. He also put forth a practical plan for action.

Jotirao Phule, perhaps influenced this 'renaissance' in Maharashtra the most. While all the other reformers were mostly brahmans, Jotirao Phule was the

only non-brahman reformer. An outline sketch of his life will help us to understand why he fought for certain causes. This is as follows :²

1827	Year of birth.
1834-38	Educated in a traditional Indian School.
1841-47	Educated in a middle school run by missionaries.
1847	Read Thomas Paine's <i>The Rights of Man</i> .
1848	Insulted for having attended the marriage of a brahman.
1848-49	Established a children's school for untouchables; leaves house with his wife for this purpose.
1851	Established a girls' school in Rasta Peth, Poona.
1852	Felicitated by the government for educational activities.
1854	Part-time teaching assignment in a school run by the Scottish Mission.
1855	Wrote the drama, <i>Tritiya Ratna</i> .
1856	Attempt to murder him.
1860	Active interest in arranging the remarriage of widows.
1863	Founded an orphanage.
1865	Published the second edition of <i>Jatibhed—viveksar</i> written by Tukaram Tatya Padawal.
1868	Govindrao (Jotirao's father) expired.
1868	Allowed untouchables to take water from the well of his own house.
1869	Published a 'pevada' (ballad) on Shivaji, and a book <i>Brahmanache Kesab</i> .
1873	Published <i>Gulamgiri</i> .
1873	Founded Satya Shodhak Samaj.
1876-82	Member of Poona Municipality.
1882	Presented an appeal to the Hunter Education Commission.
	Felicitated Tilak and Agarkar on their social work.
1883	Published <i>Shetakaryacha Asud</i> .
1885	Published <i>Satsar</i> (1 & 2) and <i>Ishara</i> .
1887	Published a book simplifying social ceremonies, without the help of the priests.

- 1888 Felicitated as 'Mahatma'.
 1889 Wrote the book *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak*.

It can be seen from this brief outline that Jotirao not only advocated reforms in the society but struggled hard for the 'renaissance'. Some of the highlights of Jotirao's leadership³ may be seen in the establishment of schools for girls and untouchables, active participation in celebrating remarriages of widows, establishment of an orphanage, establishment of Satya Shodhak Samaj, allowing the untouchables to take water from the well of his own house and so on.

During the early British period, there were two types of social reformers in Maharashtra: (1) *Karte Sudharak*, i.e., who practised the reforms that they preached, and (2) *Bolke Sudharak*, i.e., those who accepted the importance of reforms on an ideological level, but without social action to bring about social change. While some researchers include Lokhitwadi in the second category, Phule practised whatever he preached which makes him stand head and shoulders above all other reformers albeit, paying the price for this cause of the upliftment of the common man.⁴ *Gulamgiri* (slavery in the civilized British Government under the cloak of Brahmanism) and *Sarvajanik Satya-Dharma Pustak* are two important works which explain his point of view, along with *Brahmanache Kasab* (Priestcraft exposed) and *Shetkaryacha Aasud* (Cultivators' whip-cord) which was written for the defence of the sudra (Dasya) community. Phule had dedicated these books to certain movements, and sometimes to certain classes giving clear reasons for doing so. For example, in dedicating, *Brahmanache Kasab* to the Kunbis (peasants), Malis (gardeners) Mangs and Mahars (untouchables) he states that he does so in order to liberate lower classes from the brahmans who exploit them under the garb of religion. Again, *Gulamgiri* is dedicated to the good people of the United States as a token of admiration for their sublime interest and self-sacrifice, devotion to the cause of abolishing Negro slavery, with an earnest desire that 'my countrymen may take their noble example as their guide in the emancipation of their shudra Brothers from the trammels of brahman thralldom.' Similarly *Aasud* is written in defence of Shudra (Dasya) community, and *Ishura* to save the peasants from the clutches of the brahmans.⁸

Basically Phule was mainly concerned with eradicating untouchability, illiteracy, exploitation of the non-brahmans by the brahmans, inferior status of women (illiteracy amongst them, the opposition to widow remarriage, etc.), other unjust social customs and superstitions, the pitiable condition of the peasants, false notions about religion and religious practices, and so on. He firmly believed that the brahmans or 'Aryabhattachas' were outsiders, who coming from Iran, had proclaimed themselves to be superior, exploiting and hiding religious scriptures from the common man. 'The brahman styled as the Lord of the Universe, even equal to God himself... is to be worshipped, served and respected by all'⁹ is how they made their position, Phule said. He

elaborated the maxims of religion which were preached by the brahmans, as follows¹⁰:

‘A Brahman can do no wrong. To save the life of a Brahman, to speak a lie is not a sin... The feet of a Brahman are holy. In his left foot dwells all the *teerthas* (holy pilgrimages) and by dipping it into water, he makes it as holy as the waters of the holy *teerthas*... The Brahman may compel a Shudra to perform any duty because such man was created by the Almighty only for the purpose of serving the Brahmans... Let a Brahman not give temporal advice nor spiritual counsel to a Shudra... If a Shudra cohabits with a Brahman adultress, he should be hanged, but if a Brahman cohabits with the lawful wife of Shudra, he is exempted from all corporal punishment’.

These views are vividly elaborated in Phule’s *Brahmanache Kasab* (priestcraft exposed), *Aasud* and in *Gulamgiri*. The injustices, and specially the selfish laws of the ‘Aryabhattas’ for men which undermined the status of women had tormented widows by not allowing them to marry again, and hence led them into certain vices. The hair of the widow was cut off and this was called a religious rite, viz., *Keshvapana*. Thus, they thought since the beauty of woman was lost, she would not attract anybody.¹¹ (He founded an organization of barbers who refused to do the *Keshvapana*.) All these customs led Phule to believe that the brahmans had exploited the non-brahmans under the garb of religion. Since people did not know the truth, Phule searched for the truth—the ‘Satya’. Hence, he called his movement ‘Satya Shodhak Chalval’ or the ‘Satya Shodhak Samaj’ —the movement in search of truth. He sincerely believed that the spread of education would solve the problem and had himself started schools for untouchables and girls. But he also submitted a petition to the Hunter Commission stating,

‘That Government should expend profusely a large portion of revenue thus raised, on the education of the higher classes, for it is these only who take advantage of it, is anything but just or equitable... let there be schools for the Shudras in every village; but away with all Brahman ‘school-masters’. The Shudras are the life and sinews of the country, and it is to them alone, and not to the Brahmans that Government must ever look to tide over their difficulties, financial as well as political’.

Thus, the activities of Satya Shodhak Samaj show that Phule not only advocated noble principles for the upliftment of society but he actually practised them in his life¹². Some of the activities of the Samaj were as follows:

- I. Prizes were awarded for literature which encouraged reforms in agriculture.
- II. A proposal for a night-school for adults was made and was accepted.
- III. Scholarships for shudra girls, in order to encourage them to take high school or college education.

IV. At the instance of the Samaj, some non-brahman students were given studentships in one of the engineering colleges.

V. Arrange assistance for the education of poor students whose parents could not afford it.

VI. Studentships and scholarships to poor non-brahman students were also granted by the Director of Public Instructions at the request of the Samaj.

VII. Publishing useful information in periodicals like *Satya-Deepika*, *Subodh-Patrika*, and *Dyanprakash* for the upliftment of the non-brahmans which created greater awareness of the 'renaissance'.

VIII. Collecting donations, both from the members and non-members for instituting scholarships to be given to the shudra students, and the education of orphans.

IX. Gold Medals for shudra students, who passed the matriculation examination.

X. Proposal to start a boarding school for shudra students.

XI. Copies of *Gulamgiri* and *Brahmanache Kasab*, etc., were donated by the author for free distribution.

XII. Performing marriage ceremonies without the priests. Objections were raised by priests who stated that these marriages were illegal. But legal advice was taken by the Samaj, and it was proved that such marriages were legal. A book of simple rites and rituals for the followers of the Samaj was published. This was *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak*, written by Jotirao Phule, in which he condemned brahman priesthood and its exploitations.

XIII. Free books, and clothes were distributed to shudra students.

Thus, Phule's outlook—ideology—was rational, humanitarian and universal, with sympathy for those who were being exploited and their liberation. His leadership was the leadership of the non-brahmans and the movement received concrete response in Maharashtra. The membership of the Satya Shodhak Samaj was 300 in the beginning, and increased rapidly in the later period.

*Satya Shodhak Samaj during post-Phule period*¹³

1890–1920—After Phule, Ghole guided the movement. The Samaj solemnized marriages according to its own rites, without the help of the brahman priest, the Bombay High Court passing a judgment that these marriages were legal. For example, when in 1902, the movement spread from Poona to Kolhapur, and Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur who was not a direct heir to the throne was adopted into the family, the brahmans of Kolhpaur refused to perform religious rites for the Maharaja since he was not a 'real kshatriya'. But Shahu Maharaj appointed a 'kshatriya acharya' (priest) to perform these rites. By 1912, a branch of the Samaj was established in Kolhapur and in 1913, 1,513

marriages were performed by this branch. In 1917 the Samaj held a conference at Khamgaon under the presidentship of Shahu Maharaj, stressing the need for caste representation in the Council. In 1920, Maratha Shikshan Parishad (Educational Conference) was held at Nasik under the presidentship of Shahu Maharaj and passed a resolution supporting the idea of caste representation.

1920-1930—The Samaj—changed from a social movement into a political one by 1920. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were partly responsible for this. The non-brahmans who contested the election to the Legislative Council in 1920, 1923 and 1926, were elected, receiving encouragement from the non-brahman movement in Madras which had established a new party—Indian Liberal Federation—under the leadership of Nayar and Tyagraj Chetty. Bhaskarrao Jadhav, a prominent leader of the Samaj went to England to demand a separate constituency for the non-brahmans. While this demand was not accepted it helped to arouse political consciousness amongst the non-brahmans. Thus, in 1923, thirteen non-brahman candidates were elected to the Council and Bhaskarrao Jadhav was appointed a Minister. This gave an impetus to the spread of education amongst the non-Brahmans. In Satara district alone, the number of non-brahman students went upto 60,000. In the same year, the Council passed the following resolution:

‘This Council recommends to His Excellency, the Governor in the Council that in order to bring the educationally backward classes, such as the Marathas, Mohammadans, depressed classes and the like in line with the advanced classes, greater facilities should be provided for them to get education of all kinds and that in the recruitment to public services, preference should be given to persons of the aforesaid classes possessing the necessary minimum educational qualifications for the same’.

In 1926, the following resolution of Bole, a leader of the Samaj, was passed by the Bombay Legislative Council¹⁴:

‘No person shall be entitled to claim, as a matter of right, any ceremonial emoluments from any Hindu who does not call in the services of the persons claiming those emoluments’.¹⁵

This came as a serious set-back to brahman priesthood, and encouraged non-brahmans to follow the principles of the Samaj. Later on, the Samaj gained control over the Local Boards and Municipalities, advocating the ideology of the Samaj in the working of these Bodies.

1930-1946—In 1937, in Bombay presidency, non-brahmans were elected to the Council, under the banner of the Indian National Congress. In 1938, a Conference of the non-brahmans of Vidarbha and Madhya Pradesh was held

under the presidentship of Keshavrao Jedhe, which passed a vote of confidence in the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi. Later on, there was unrest and dissatisfaction among the non-brahman members of the Congress, which led to the establishment of a new non-brahman party 'Peasants and Workers' Party', under the presidentship of Shankarrao Mere, while Nana Patil, Datta Deshmukh, Tulshidas Jadhav, Bhasusahed Raut were other prominent leaders who guided the movement of the Samaj. Karmaveer Baburao Patil of Satara established Rayat Shikashan Sanstha which helped the spread of education among the non-brahmans. Both the Party and the Sanstha, as well as Swami Vivekanand Sanstha are continuing their work even now, for the upliftment of the non-brahman classes in Maharashtra, the real source of inspiration behind which has been Mahatma Jotirao Phule.

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Discussion

on Paper by Y M Pathan

N SANJEEVI/ As compared to Tamilnadu there seems to be no brahman domination in Maharashtra. Is there any reason for this ? What is the reaction of brahmans against such movements, specially in areas where they dominate? What is the situation of non-brahman movements today in Maharashtra?

S R MEHROTRA/ Why was there a marked anti-brahman movement in Maharashtra, and not in neighbouring Gujarat? If a large part of the educational movement was in the hands of brahmans in Maharashtra, this was restricted to the urban areas, and did not extend to areas where land was controlled by the non-brahmans. Was there any economic control of land by the brahmans? What was the influence of Christianity and missionaries on Phule and his movement? Why did Phule oppose the Indian National Congress?

LEELA DUBE/ Who were the shudras? Was not the land controlled both by the Inamdars and Deshmukh brahmans as well as Marathas and Kunbis who also had a fair measure of land? What was the role of the Kayasthas? Where did Phule place the Kayasthas, since they were well-advanced in education, and were sophisticated?

Sati was never a general phenomenon in India. It was an ideal which was followed in very rich and very well-established families; the wife was made to go to the pyre since she would be a drain on the wealth and be a burden because of widowhood!

If it is considered that this movement was not a protest movement against the social supremacy of brahmans, and more of a movement against economic privileges, then, did it occur in those areas where brahmans were in control of land? In the post-Phule times, did not the rich and powerful Marathas take over the movement, a development not visualized by Phule himself?

In Gujarat, if the movement did not take place, it was because the Kunbis could act as priests and brahmans were not required.

S C MISRA/ Was the dimension of the movement in its early stages strong enough to be labelled a social movement?

The word Maharashtra should not be used because it has different connotations now. At that time some of these areas of Marathwada, Khandesh and Berar were part of other states, and were not influenced by this movement. The movement in its early stage was focussed in the Poona and Satara regions. Moreover, the movement seems to be restricted to the middle agrarian class, rather than to the untouchables.

SACHCHIDANANDA/ While it is established that the movement was anti-Brahmanic, did the interest of all the classes such as the agricultural class, the untouchables and other non-Brahmanic classes coincide? If the tension between and within these various classes is reflected in the movement, can it be traced in the history of the movement? We may make a comparison of the anti-brahman movement of the Justice Party in Tamilnadu, with Phule's movement.

Y B DAMLE/ What was the impact of other reform movements on Phule's movement, such as Agarkar and others?

K J SHAH/ In understanding the difference between what has been called the *Karte Sudharak* and *Bolke Sudharak*, we may take the *Bolke Sudharak* to be the political agitators, and the *Karte Sudharak* as the actual social workers. In this case, a moral judgement cannot be passed, i.e., to term it as a failure of the *Bolke Sudharak*. At best, it was as an intellectual failure, because they were unable to decide on the priorities of undertaking a reform which was relatively effective. Thus, the problem is much more complicated than has been visualized.

J S GREWAL/ Was the message of Phule really rejected by the shudras and non-brahmans? Was the Satya Shodhak Samaj the only agency of non-brahman movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? What was the relative position of the brahmins during this period?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ The difference in the degrees of anti-brahman movement in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu may be looked upon as a degree of brahman control over various spheres and on various occasions. For example, in Gujarat there were no Peshwa rulers whose memories lingered perhaps as a folk memory in the anti-brahman movements. Similarly, there has been nothing like the degree of domination in Gujarat as in Tamil Nadu.

S C MISRA/ I don't think one should go into the psychological dimension of the problem. The fact is that in North India, above the Narmada, the brahman economic and political domination has not been so concentrated as it

has been in the South. In North India, Muslims, Rajputs, and others also have dominated. Therefore, the polarity is not so sharp, and hence the dilution of movements.

The question of expectations of certain castes also needs to be taken into account, for those who controlled the land partly would protest more, i.e., relative deprivation has to be taken into account.

P H PRABHU/ While the movement against injustice to untouchables was initiated by brahmans in the beginning in Maharashtra, these brahman reformists were not as well organized as the non-brahman groups.

T K OOMMEN/ A movement only solidifies itself if it is against something, such as wealth, power and privilege. It will increase or decrease depending upon the concentration. But we have to take into account the intra-brahman divisions that exist, and to the extent that these may be divided, specially in a group of brahmans supported by the non-brahmans, the solidification will depend upon this factor. This is why, for example, the heterogeneity of brahmans in Maharashtra diffused the reaction of the brahmans and the protest of the non-brahmans, compared to what happened in Tamilnadu.

It may be noted that in the initial stages of these movements, the depressed classes seldom have enough resources for leadership, which has to come from the upper classes, such as the brahman reformers in Maharashtra.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ We may bear in mind that Pathan has discussed the ideological content and not the social content.

RESPONSE

Y M PATHAN/ Since brahman reformers helped Phule's movement, their reaction was not entirely unfavourable, such as that of Tilak and Agarkar. There was some opposition from orthodox brahmans, whose services were needed since even for performing civil marriages there are no Maratha priests.

Later on, and today, the movement has become caste-conscious, because it is dominated by Marathas specially the Patils and the Deshmukhs. Rich peasants and upper castes have dominated the movement in the post-Phule period, which is also true for the Congress Party today in Maharashtra.

Since Phule was in contact with the missionaries, this influence is reflected in some of his books; and he was also influenced by Thomas Paine. The shudras whom Phule refers to were such of the untouchables as the Mahars, the Mangs, the Kunbis and the Malis (he was himself a Mali).

In the Konkan area brahmans control the land today, even though it has been officially abolished.

Phule considered the Kayastha as an upper class.

Phule symbolically protested against *Sati* since it was an orthodox phenomenon, even though it was not generally practised.

During Phule's time the movement was restricted to the Poona and the Desh areas. But in post-Phule times Khamgaon, Vidarbha and Kolhapur areas were influenced by the movement.

There were several untouchables who were following this movement, but they later on united under the leadership of Ambedkar. Since the non-brahman groups had different interests they responded differently.

When I was referring to *Karte Sudharak* and *Bolke Sudharak* I had in mind the Lokhitwadi who opposed the *Karmakanda* but in their own life they did not follow what they preached. There were several social reform movements that existed at that time, but this, Satya Shodhak Samaj, was the only non-brahman movement, i.e., started and followed by non-brahmans.

Sudhir Chandra

The Problem of Social Reform in Modern India: The Study of a Case

THE SPRING OF 1887 HAD BARELY BEGUN WHEN THE CASE OF *Dadaji vs. Rakhmabai* suddenly shot into prominence and sparked off a furious debate on the question of social reform in India. Opposing stances were assumed with varying degrees of passionate acridity. The intermittent debate on social reform had so far been in the nature of an abstract discussion involving generalized assertions and counter-assertions about the merits and demerits of existing social institutions and practices in relation to the lives of anonymous men and women. The debate now became specific, affecting the misery and happiness of identifiable individuals in flesh and blood. And because of its specificity the debate acquired an element of immediacy, and of reality. With the argument moving from the general to the particular, it became crucial for the parties concerned to present this *Dadaji vs. Rakhmabai* case in such a way as would lead to and confirm their particular attitude towards the question of social reform. Thus it happened that the controversy provoked by this case brought into sharp relief the passions, pulls, confusion and difficulties of social reform in later nineteenth century India.

Restitution of conjugal rights was the issue involved in this case; though, as often happens when private differences are converted into a legal battle, other issues were also thrown in deliberately by both the parties in a bid to establish the *mala fide* intentions of each other. Notwithstanding the antagonistic versions of the plaintiff and the defendant, the basic facts of the case may be sifted before the significance of the conversion of an ordinary legal suit into a raging public controversy can be comprehended.

Rakhmabai was the daughter of Janardan Pandurang and Jayantibai. Her father died in 1867. In 1871, after four years of widowhood, Jayantibai married Dr. Sakharam Arjun, and Rakhmabai started living in her step-father's house. The remarriage of Jayantibai, incidentally, was not a matter of social reform. In her caste of carpenters—Sutar or Pachkalshi as it was called, widow

re-marriage was a socially accepted practice. In 1875 or 1876, when Rakhmabai was either eleven or thirteen, she was married to Dadaji Bhikaji, then twenty, and a cousin of Dr Sakharam Arjun.¹ For some time Dadaji was maintained and educated by his cousin and father-in-law, Dr Sakharam, until, for reasons which were later variously represented by the rival parties, Dadaji decided to stay with his uncle, Narayan Dharmaji, a man whose reputation was not above board inasmuch as he was living with a mistress called Chinamma.²

All this while Rakhmabai and Dadaji had not cohabited. In the meantime Rakhmabai had acquired some education and become secretary of the Native Ladies' Society, also known as the Arya Mahila Samaj. It seems that by 1880, for reasons conflictingly described by the contending parties, Dr Sakharam had made up his mind not to let his step-daughter go and live with her husband.³ In 1884, Dadaji, while being maintained by his uncle, decided to file a suit for the restitution of conjugal rights. Since Dr Sakharam had died, the case for the defendant was taken care of by Rao Bahadur Harichandra Jadowji, the maternal grand-father of Rakhmabai. Justice Pinhey, who tried the case first, decided in favour of Rakhmabai, saying that a young lady could not be disposed of like a horse or a bullock. But Justice Farran, who heard the appeal, gave his judgment in Dadaji's favour, and Rakhmabai was, consequently, confronted with the options of either joining her husband within one month or going to jail in case her husband sued her further for recusancy. Rakhmabai decided to appeal against Farran's judgement. This paper seeks to study the pattern of social reform movement in modern India, using this brief interregnum between the decision and the appeal as a focus.

Judging by past experience, one should have expected that an ordinary case of restitution of conjugal rights would cause no more than a ripple outside the court building.⁴ What happened instead was that even before Justice Farran had delivered his judgment, the case was dramatized by B. M. Malabari in order to provide a sharp edge to his agitation against infant marriage and enforced widowhood which he had initiated with the publication of his 'Notes' on August 15, 1884. The orthodoxy, which was quick to apprehend trouble from this kind of dramatization, immediately hit back. The stage was set for a serious trial of strength between the parties concerned—a trial, the outcome of which, they realized, would significantly affect the course of social reform in the country.

Having seen that mere trial of 'strength in dialectics' had not won him many adherents, Malabari decided to use the Rakhmabai case to force the issue of social reform towards some kind of practical action. There was, in fact, a grain of truth in the chagrined comment of the *Mahratta* that Malabari, 'that great Avatar of reform', knew 'so well how to manufacture sensational topics'.⁵ Feeling that 'another case of equal importance' might not come before the public for at least twenty years, he made the Rakhmabai case a test case. Even at the risk of sounding 'cruel to Rakhmabai personally', Malabari

rather wished, 'for the sake of future Rakhmabais, that the case went against her', and appeal to the Privy Council became necessary.⁶ 'We must know our position', he wrote, 'to be better able to work in future'. Moreover, as one who believed in the need for social legislation, he could see that the government would 'do nothing till every facility offered by the existing law' had been availed of and found insufficient.⁷

Apart from the possibility of obliging the government to undertake legislation, Malabari also hoped to be able to arouse a large number of people by highlighting the injustice done to an innocent young lady. In order to achieve this, the public issues involved in the case were formulated, and exhortations were made to the minds and hearts of men and women in the name of an unfortunate victim of evil social practices. Rakhmabai was represented as a martyr upon whom caste and British Indian law courts were enforcing 'a marriage to which she was as much a party as any of the Judges of the High Court' of Bombay; a martyr who was being condemned to a 'new form of Suttee'.⁸ She was even compared to Jesus Christ, and it was hoped that this 'redeemer of the girl-wives of India', who had suffered and offered herself 'as a sacrifice', would 'bring about the emancipation' of 'her sisters of India'. R. Raghunath Rao, a social reformer, who made this comparison, went on to add, significantly, 'I look upon her confinement as the result of the national sin of having violated the pure, liberal and just laws of our star-like Rishis. This event evidences the fulfilment of the prophecy mentioned in our Shastras, viz., that in this era persons not cognizant of the Law shall ascend royal seats and shall administer as law that which is no law. (*Bhagavat*, 12th skanda.)'⁹

In spite of believing that Rakhmabai's grievances against her husband were not of a particularly grave and convincing nature, Vaman Abaji Modak, principal of the Elphinstone High School, Bombay, lent his support to the young lady because he held 'personal liberty to be the most sacred and inalienable right of every human being under normal conditions.'¹⁰

The invocations made—from the laws of ancient Rishis to the principle of personal liberty—were, indeed, wide-ranging. At the operational plane, they resulted in the adoption of a variety of tactics. This variety, however, did not represent a deliberate, planned, and comprehensive strategy of social reform. Rather, it was a manifestation of the weakness of social reformers in as much as it resulted from the differences, emotional as well as intellectual, that prevailed among them.

As for the formulation of the public issues involved in the case, three of these were especially highlighted in relation to the general problem of social reform. First, the case posed the problem of the precise circumstances and conditions that imparted validity to the marriage tie. Secondly, it provided a sense of urgency to the discussion of the consequences, social and moral, of early marriages. Finally, it seemed to stress the need for 'helping forward the slow movement of reform among a timid and conservative people by legislative support.'¹¹

Regarding the circumstances and conditions that gave validity to the marriage tie, it was pointed out that Justice Farran's judgment had provided 'a tragic seriousness to the absurd notions of lawful marriage' which the orthodoxy had propounded.¹² Rakhmabai had been married in childhood, and without her consent. True, Hindu marriage was a *sanskar*. But it was absurd to maintain that an *infant* marriage was a *sanskar*. On whom was the *sanskar*, 'this holiest of holy institutions', imposed? 'Sometimes on babes unborn; sometimes on infants; frequently on little girls married to men much older than themselves; invariably on girls quite incompetent to form an intelligent idea of the *sanskar* or of giving an intelligent assent thereto.'¹³

This was a subversive argument. For while it seemed impossible to suggest the prohibition of marriage till the time that the boy and the girl were sufficiently grown up to be able to assent intelligently to their marriage, the acceptance of assent as an essential condition of validating marriage created the possibility of permitting a situation in which "the parties ought to be free to ratify or not to ratify" the marriage tie. And this was supposed to be 'the least concession that intelligent Hindu opinion should make.'¹⁴

Rakhmabai's marriage, moreover, had remained unconsummated. In the mid-1860s William Muir had suggested that the courts of law should refuse to 'recognise unconsummated marriages'. But even if the general proposition regarding the non-recognition of such marriages was not accepted, it was but logical that there could be no suit for the restitution of conjugal rights where the rights had never been instituted.¹⁵

Apart from the question of its validity, early marriage was disastrous in its consequences, the *Bengalee* stressed, from whatever point of view one chose to look at the matter. It stunted the development of an individual's personality, and it perpetrated "an outrage upon woman-kind". So unnatural was "the institution that in the most solemn event of life, the party most concerned" was deprived of the slightest voice. 'If Rakhmabai had been more fortunately wedded and in the maturity of years', it was argued, 'she would have been, with her accomplishments and her talents, the centre of a prosperous and happy family.'¹⁶ And the moral so sharply emphasised by this individual case was one of virtually universal application in the country. There was, moreover, the very important effect of early marriage in the form of continuous physical degeneration of Indians. This aspect of the problem had been seriously taken up by Keshab Chandra Sen who had sought and published, in 1871, a cross-section of Indian and European medical opinion on the consequences of early marriage. The whole debate was now republished and further extended.¹⁷ Finally, the inference was drawn that the disappearance of early marriage would mark 'the dawn of a happy and new era in the social as also in the political history of the country.'¹⁸

As for the desirability of lending to social reform the support of legislation, 'A Hindu', writing to the *Bombay Gazette*, put the matter tersely, 'It is vain to expect the Hindus themselves to move.... Government, therefore, are bound

to see that their own power is not used to enforce harsh and one-sided arrangements...'¹⁹ It was argued, that the Rakhmabai case had demonstrated 'the utter hopelessness of Natives themselves, educated or uneducated, ever redressing the wrongs of their women. The illiterate classes are indifferent, and they are not much to blame for it. But what are we to think of the educated and otherwise enlightened classes? They not only keep clear of the discussion as a body, but we see some of them gloating over the misery of the woman, making jokes at her expense, and going into raptures over the decision of the High Court.'²⁰

The Rakhmabai case was especially used to justify the need for social legislation. It was asserted that the agony to which this unfortunate lady had been exposed was the outcome of an anomalous intrusion of English legal provisions into the Hindu law. The latter did not recognize suits for the restitution of conjugal rights. The right to bring such suits had been engrafted from English law. But what made the combination anomalous was the fact that while Hindu law sanctioned infant marriage, the jumbling of the English principle of legal enforcement of marital rights meant that a husband could compel a wife to live with him even though they were married when they, or she, did not know what the implications of the act would be. The British in India having created such an anomaly, it was only just that the legislature should interfere in such a way as to extinguish and prevent anomalous combinations of principles drawn from various systems of jurisprudence.²⁴

It was suggested, with a touch of irony, that this grafting of principles had been accepted by the Hindu orthodoxy only because it had resulted in further subjugating the Hindu woman.²² The orthodoxy was confronted with the logic of its partial acceptance of English legal principles to neutralize its opposition to social legislation. For, if it was opposed to outside interference as a matter of principle, it could not possibly seek 'the active interference of a foreign law to enforce' its own one-sided customs. The right thing for the orthodoxy to do, in that case, was to go to the social authority vested in and exercised by caste.²³

This was the position taken by some reformers on the three major issues flowing from the Rakhmabai case. But they were not the only reformers. There were others who refused to go so far, or to draw similar inferences from the facts of the case. This was clear from the differences, to cite but one example, that arose within the Rakhmabai Defence Committee which had been organized in Bombay as a result of inspiration from Principal Wordsworth of the Elphinstone College. So acute became the divergence of opinion within the Committee on the three issues that its task was reduced to merely trying to prevent the attachment of Rakhmabai's person in case the worse comes to the worst.' And this, as Malabari pointed out with angered disappointment was tantamount to doing 'next to nothing',²⁴

If such was the position of people who were proud to describe themselves as reformers without any qualifications, those who viewed themselves and

were viewed by others as "orthodox reformers" were bound to react with a degree of aggressiveness to the stand that Rakhmabai had taken. This was so for two reasons: because of the implications of the specific issues involved in the case; and because the general nature of Hindu society had been assailed as a result of the assertion that the Rakhmabai case was a logical product of the dysfunctional institutions of this society. It may, however, be mentioned that the reactions of the orthodox reformers also contained variations of response.

Yet, there was a common realization that behind the attempt to make this a test was a 'conspiracy against the social autonomy of the Hindu community';²⁵ a conspiracy the aim of which was to organize a 'tirade against our ancient codes of laws'.²⁶ Since 'the whole Hindu society had been maligned in the most unjust manner', it was asserted, those who cared for their society had to defend it against the onslaught.²⁷

If the *Dadaji vs. Rakhmabai* case was suspected to have been a peg to hang the tirade against Hindu society on, it was necessary to debunk the martyrdom of the defendant. Rakhmabai, consequently, was represented as a 'foolish, ill-advised, and imperious young woman'²⁸ who, 'inspired with fine notions of independence and freedom which Western education has instilled into her', had decided to rebel against her lawfully wedded husband. Even while granting, for the sake of argument, that Dadaji was 'utterly unworthy to become the consort of such a fine lady', it could not be forgotten that he was 'nevertheless her husband, and the laws of all civilised countries would repudiate any action which would in the slightest degree interfere with conjugal relations'.²⁹ As a woman Rakhmabai was not her own master. She could never be so in any stage of her existence. No law could untie the marriage knot once it had been tied; and no legislature could change this law, barbarous though it be. 'Rakhmabai's position would not at all improve by her recusancy, and her martyrdom would not cause her to be worshipped as a saint by her sisters; it would cause her to be scorned.'³⁰

The marital bond was too sacred to be torn asunder 'for sentimental reasons under high-sounding and fictitious names such as justice, equity and good conscience'.³¹ Here was a language that struck a pleasant chord in so many contemporary hearts.³²

It was further argued that nothing but 'the merest impertinence' could account for the way some people were quibbling 'about the consent of a girl of 11 years of age'. The law of the land did not 'require the girl to be a party to the contract'; she was rather 'the subject of a contract into which her parent or guardian' entered in her behalf. (The use of the singular number for parent may be noted as an indication of the position of women in contemporary Hindu society; the mother is excluded from meaningful participation in the marriage of the daughter.) Technically the girl was given away in marriage by her parent or guardian.³³

Moving away from the emotionally charged obstinacy with which the cause of orthodoxy was usually championed, the *Mahratta* faced the question of consent as an essential element for the validation of marriage in a sober and rational manner to uphold the orthodox point of view. It wrote, 'The point of intelligent consent, which must be given up if we hold marriage to be a sacrament, does not therefore make the case stronger unless our reformers are prepared to ask for a law prohibiting marriages of girls below the age of 15 or 16—a position the absurdity of which is patent to every Hindu mind'.³⁴ This was a real problem. Even Malabari was not prepared to press for such a high minimum age for marriage; and the possible extension of the right to repudiate an early marriage at a later stage on the ground of the absence of consent demolished the very notion of marriage as a sacrament.

In order to appeal successfully to the people at large, arguments were used that would conjure up visions of social disorder and sexual license. The reformers' case was shrewdly overstated, even deliberately distorted to produce popular hostility against it. The *Liberal*, the official organ of the New Dispensation or Naba Bidhan of Keshab Chandra Sen, who had been instrumental in getting the Special Marriage Act passed, could argue, so soon after the death of Sen, that Rakhmabai was being 'dragged forward to afford our reformers an argument for the abolition of the marriage tie'. 'Are we', the paper posed the exaggerated question, 'to be told that marriages of millions are to be declared null and void because Rakhmabai's husband is poor and asthmatic?' The reformers' case having been thus distorted, it was easy to argue with some show of reason, 'If an unhappy marriage is a reason for divorce, then there will be no end of divorce in this and other countries, considering that a considerable fraction of married life in the world is unhappy, and another large fraction is but indifferent. We cannot allow marriage to be so trifled with that every case of conjugal misery should be made to end in separation'. Coming back to Rakhmabai, the *Liberal* added that she had a number of options before her, one of these being to become a 'ministering angel' to her husband by trying to better his condition, and provide an example which would be 'imitated far and wide over India', and immortalize her as a modern Savitri.³⁵

Marriage in India being a sacrament, it was argued that Hindus would never give up their *sanskarist* marriage in favour of the Western consensual marriage which was no more than 'a civil contract, pure and simple'. Examples were ferreted out from the West to make the point that 'the frequent occurrence of these social scandals among the "socially civilised" communities clearly proves that the system of consensual marriages is after all not that perfect a system, calculated to ensure the domestic and social happiness of those who follow it, which it is represented to be.'³⁶

Rationalizations were also attempted to defend the early marriage of girls. It was argued that the marriage of boys must be *postponed* till, and that of girls

must *precede* a certain age for purposes of education and preparation for the world. A girl had to be weighted with the idea that she had been married to prevent her imagination from going astray and to make her serious.³⁷ No less a scholar and reformer than R G Bhandarkar argued that both boys and girls must be married early so that they could be adapted to each other as husband and wife.³⁸ That the first of these rationalizations was attempted by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Bengal is significant because May and December marriages were common among Bengalis with the girl being married before puberty to a considerably older person. Argument, thus, was handled as a pliant tool to rationalize whatever was in existence; and also to explain away inconvenient issues like physical deterioration as a consequence of early marriage.³⁹

The argument that related consummation of marriage to its validity was dismissed as nasty, an argument which had 'never been recognised by our law, nor by any civilised code of Europe as essential for giving validity to marriage'.⁴⁰ This question, too, was handled remarkably cleverly by the *Mahratta*. It tried to contain the importance of the Rakhmabai case by discussing some of the issues involved in it as specific instead of letting them be presented as a justification for advancing social reform in general and social legislation in particular. The *Mahratta* insisted that Rakhmabai's case should not be based 'on the consummation or otherwise of the marriage'. For, after all, the cruelty and inefficacy of the punishment given to Rakhmabai—on which grounds alone relief could be asked for—had nothing to do with the non-consummation of her marriage.⁴¹

While there was a section of opinion which saw many advantages in early marriage and found it essential for the stability of Hindu society, there was another approach according to which its evils could be accepted to some extent without conceding the need for social legislation. This was done by suggesting that during the preceding decades the marriageable age of boys and girls had been showing an upward trend: unmarried girls of eleven or twelve could now be found among orthodox Hindus, and unmarried girls of thirteen or fourteen among educated *babus*.⁴² The *Mahratta* did not believe that the marriageable age had gone up so much. But that did not affect the basic assertion. For the *Mahratta* also contended that this age was gradually rising.⁴³

What united the orthodox sections was their determined opposition to social legislation. The orthodox reformers contended that instead of promoting it, the 'noisy reformers of the day' were 'likely to spoil the cause of reform'. There was no sense in being isolated as a result of offending 'the orthodox party unnecessarily'. Reform, in order to be real, had to 'be carried by civil means—by means of education and moral exemplars'.⁴⁴

The charge of practising double standards in opposing social legislation was also answered. Since the British Indian courts of law had assumed jurisdiction over such social matters as the enforcement of conjugal discipline, it

was no longer possible to restore the earlier position of the caste *panchayat* in this respect.⁴⁵

What, then, was the situation in 1887, the year of the first National Social Conference, as revealed by the variety of responses elicited by the *Dadaji vs. Rakhmabai* case? The prospect was by no means cheerful. The rival sections of opinion, it seems, were doing little more than shadow fighting. And yet, in a different sense, they were doing something more than that.

It was a peculiar syndrome. Let us set aside those who were passionately committed to maintaining the *status quo*. How did those feel and act who were willing to concede the need for bringing about change in certain aspects of their society? Admitting that their commitment to change, as reflected in their professions and actions, was of an uneven nature, they were all obliged to validate the proposed change with reference to an earlier and supposedly pure tradition or *shastric* injunction.

This was an exercise that was at once necessary and ineffectual. It was necessary because mere appeals to conscience or rationalism were unlikely to cut much ice with a people who were tradition-bound.⁴⁶ No reformer interested in results, (and almost by definition he would be), could afford to assail an existing practice unless he was doing so on the ground that the practice constituted a departure from a purer tradition. The ideology of revivalism was thus rooted in the situation that had to be reformed. But the very situation, or psychology, that rendered appeals to an earlier authority necessary drastically reduced its possible effectiveness. For the attachment to tradition was not to tradition as a category in itself but to tradition as it was seen in the form of a whole complex of existing customs, values and practices; a fact lamented again and again by contemporary reformers.

The upshot of this was a kind of resistance to change, even if the change meant going back to a purer variety of tradition in the name of which or as a result of attachment to which (an attachment not always consciously realized), the proposed change was being resisted. This resistance had been so internalized that even the most excruciating form of emotional agony was only rarely capable of diminishing the hold of this resistance. Such a situation, so commonly seen by him, was described by Malabari with a poignance that highlights the basic dilemma of the social reformer, 'Ask any man who has a widow-daughter if he relishes his food ... if he feels refreshed after sleep ... Although he may never speak it out, yet at times remorse seizes upon him.... Surely few Hindus enjoy a happy life in the truest sense....'⁴⁷

Ranade faced this problem when he told Malabari that "mere considerations of expediency or economical calculations of gains or losses" could hardly bring about reform in "a community like ours, so spellbound by custom and authority". He stressed another aspect of this resistance to change when he added, "our people feel, and feel earnestly, that some of our social customs are fraught with evils, but as this evil is of a temporal character, they think

that it does not justify a breach of commands divine, for such breach involves a higher penalty."⁴⁸

What Ranade did not stress, though he should have done so after his own experience of the shadow that persisted between his profession and practice, was the ruthless effectiveness with which caste, the basic unit for ensuring conformism in form, was able to enforce its authority through the dreaded instrumentality of excommunication. This was so because the non-emergence of alternative units of social cohesion which could cater to the basic psychological and social needs of their members made it difficult for the excommunicated man to get integrated into a community within which he could move freely, marry himself or his children, and within which eating with him would not be taboo.

Confronted with severe operational constraints, those who could identify social evils were obliged to resort to a strategy that was unavoidable and virtually self-defeating. The cause of social reform was further hampered by the detrimental demonstration effect produced by the personal response, at the level of action, of many a reformer to this difficult situation. For in spite of their commitment to what they were professing—and this is not a blanket statement about all who claimed to be social reformers—many reformers could not live upto their precepts, and created doubts about their sincerity. This was particularly so because the behaviour pattern of the social reformer was closely observed, and the slightest lapse on his part was magnified by the opposite party.

The inevitable reliance on some earlier tradition, historical or *shastric*, inasmuch as it involved a reinterpretation of tradition, limited the manoeuvrability of the social reformer by forcing him to meet the upholders of orthodoxy on their own ground, and narrowed the scope of his reasoning. And then not only were they—the orthodox—better-equipped to play this game, the audience, which alone would determine as to who was finally victorious and for the possible conversion of which the social reformer was obliged to enter this arena, was more than inclined to judge in favour of the orthodox interpretation, attached as the audience generally was to tradition as it then existed.⁴⁹

It was not very comforting, in these circumstances, to hope that with the progressive development of education reform would become voluntarily acceptable to the people; more so as the emergence of political consciousness among them was demanding a different scheme of priorities and inducing a different look at things indigenous, or national as they were beginning to be called.⁵⁰

So far as the reform of the existing marriage system was concerned, it was adversely affected also by the emotional reflexes of people to matters relating to sex. The obsession with the purity of the wife—the desire to get an uncontaminated wife at the time of marriage—made it difficult to bring about any appreciable rise in the minimum marriageable age.⁵¹ It was not for

nothing that the entire widow remarriage movement was concerned with unconsummated child marriages; it was virtually confined to virgin-widows.

The situation being highly unfavourable to the practical acceptance of social reforms, nineteenth century Indian social reformers did not move appreciably beyond the intellectual advocacy of reform. The problem was stated with remarkable perception and brevity by a contemporary novelist, G. M. Tripathi, and the following extract may be given by way of conclusion:⁵²

...Social Ethics, like all human institutions is *a posteriori*, and the poetical idea of Natural Ideals as well as this sentiment of childlike Justice must both yield to the lessons of Consequences and Experience, such as either the historical and inductive studies of the few or the business-like instincts of the many may work out for the progress of society, and the majority of men must be content to move within the unintelligible but artistic web that these Spiders spin out of their inner energies.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Indian Spectator*, 20 March 1887, wrote that Rakhmabai was 11 at the time of her marriage; Dadaji, in his 'Exposition' of 14 April 1887 said that Rakhmabai was then 13. *Ibid.*, 1887. See also Dr Kirtikar's account of the case, *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887.
2. *Voice of India*, November, 1887, pp. 542-44.
3. After the second marriage of her mother, Rakhmabai had acquired the property of her natural father. This was made a central factor in the discussion on the motives of the parties involved in the case. Dadaji maintained that Rakhmabai's grandfather and mother did not want to part with the property she had inherited; hence their reluctance to let her live with Dadaji. *Indian Spectator*, 24 April 1887. Dr Kirtikar, representing the 'orthodox reformers', said that the villain of the piece was Dr Sakharam who had married his step-daughter to a poor and dependent cousin in the hope of retaining the property inherited by Rakhmabai. What Dr Kirtikar aimed at showing was that the case was no reflection on the state of Hindu society because what was responsible for it was the cupidity of a step-father, and not any social evil. *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887. The reformers were insinuating that Dadaji was himself interested in Rakhmabai's property. *Indian Spectator*, 24 April 1887.
4. For earlier cases of this nature see *Home Department, Judicial Proceedings*, June 1887, Nos. 189-192.
5. *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887.
6. *Indian Spectator*, 10 July 1887.
7. *Ibid.*, 15 May 1887. How justified Malabari was in taking this position becomes clear from the discussion on the Rakhmabai case within the supreme executive council, *Home Department, Judicial Proceedings*, June 1887, Nos. 189-192.
8. *Indian Spectator*, 6 March 1887. It wrote: 'And the Judges countenance this outrage, in fact offer to serve as a constable and jailor. What could they do—poormen—such is supposed to be the law of the Hindus. And what could the British Government do?—poor Government—their mission is to perpetuate inequalities. The High Court will go on grinding the dead-bones of law, and the Government of India will go on whistling in sympathy with the process which is grinding the womanhood out of the women of Hindustan'.
9. Letter of 8 March, *Ibid.*, 13 March 1887.
10. Letter to the *Bombay Gazette*, reproduced in *Indian Spectator*, 27 March 1887.
11. Minute of Wordsworth, principal of the Elphinstone College, Bombay, and the chief spirit behind the Rakhmabai Defence Committee, *Ibid.*, 5 June 1887.
12. *Indian Messenger* quoted in *Indu Prakash*, 28 March 1887.
13. *Indian Spectator*, 20 March 1887.
14. *Ibid.* The *Spectator* further wrote: '...What is the meaning of infant marriage, child widow, girl mother? Is it human language or what? *Infant marriage* is a contradiction

in terms, it is an impossible combination of words... it implies such a violence upon Nature and the recognized laws of society.... But parents are not the parties so vitally concerned as their children, and parental authority cannot go beyond advice and guidance.' Even a relatively conservative paper the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta, supported this radical proposal : 'Whatever we may think of the limits of age, as being law or otherwise, we can safely follow the rule as regards *impuberess*... if both or either of the parties were *impuberess* at the time of the marriage, the marriage, though then invalid, became valid by their living together with the intention of being married after puberty was attained.... Who are to be considered *impuberess* may be laid down by law... We are sure that the Hindu society would not look upon this partial modification of existing rules as an innovation, and feel outraged. We cannot suggest a more reasonable modification'. 12 April, 1887.

15. *Indian Spectator*, 10 July 1887.
16. *Bengalee*, 19 March 1887.
17. *Indian Spectator*, 21 Aug. 4, 11 Sept. 1887. As a specimen of the discussion in 1887 may be given the following extract from *Tribune*, 31 Aug. 1887: 'It is the height of foolishness to say that infant marriage does not deteriorate the physique of a people. Medical men are agreed that a woman does not reach her full development—the parts concerned in gestation and delivery do not reach their full growth and strength—before she is 18; they are in the same way agreed that a man does not reach his full development of bones and stature before he is twenty-four... In Bengal infant marriage has prevailed now for centuries—what wonder that they should be a thin-boned and weak race? And according to the law of heredity the descendants of infancy-marrying parents are sure to feel the necessity of marrying in infancy'. The writer then invoked the authority of Sushrut, 'the greatest Hindu medical authority', to stress the debilitating effect of early marriage on the progeny. No wonder when all possible arguments were used and abused by one party to prove its point, the others also did it, and perhaps did it with vengeance.
18. *Bengalee*, 19 March 1887.
19. *Bombay Gazettee*, 22 March 1887.
20. *Indian Spectator*, 27 March 1887.
21. *Indian Nation*, 11 April 1887.
22. *Sind Times*, 9 April 1887, in *Indian Spectator*, 17 April 1887. With naive hope, the *Sind Times* wrote: 'But when it can be proved that the law as interpreted in Rakhma-bai's case has neither the sanction of sacred law nor of custom, that it is foreign to the spirit as well as the letter of Hindu law, and that there is no justification for giving the force of a precedent to a law which is as unjust as it is without any tradition in this country, there should be no difficulty in persuading the Legislature to amend the law'. The *Civil and Military Gazette*, 19 April 1887, emphasized the point when it wrote that the British in India 'perpetrate an injustice that cries to heaven, and then blame the barbarity of native custom.'
23. *Indian Spectator*, 27 March 1887.
24. *Ibid.*, 5 June 1887.
25. *Dnyan Prakash*, 21 April 1887.
26. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 July 1887.
27. Dr Kirtikar's lecture in Bombay, *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887.
28. *Karnataka Prakashika*, 4 April 1887.
29. *Hindoo Patriot*, 14 March 1887.
30. *Indian Courier*, 26 March 1887.
31. *People's Friend*, 26 March 1887, in *Indian Spectator*, 17 April 1887.
32. See K. N. M.'s letter in *Mahratta*, 10 April 1887.
33. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 April 1887.
34. *Mahratta*, 28 Aug. 1887.
35. *Liberal and Deen Bandhu* quoted in *Indian Spectator*, 17 April 1887.
36. *Ibid.*, Nov. 1887.
37. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 25 Aug. 1887.
38. *Indian Spectator*, 4 Sept. 1887. The *Spectator* retorted that the adaptation was to the mother-in-law and not necessarily to the husband.
39. *Hindu*, 26 Aug. 1887.
40. *Hindoo Patriot*, 4 April 1887.
41. *Mahratta*, 10 April 1887.
42. See *Voice of India*, Oct. 1887.
43. *Mahratta*, 31 Aug. 1887.
44. *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887.
45. *Ibid.*, 10 April 1887; *Dnyan Prakash*, 11 April 1887.

46. This I have discussed in my book, *Dependence and Disillusionment Emergence of National Consciousness in Later 19th Century India*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 43-54
47. *Indian Spectator*, 28 Oct. 1887.
48. *Mahratta*, 31 Aug. 1887. It is significant that the *Mahratta* reproduced this extract from Ranade.
49. K. S. Madras in *Indian Spectator*, 18 Dec. 1887; see also *Mahratta*, 17 April 1887.
50. *Indian Spectator*, 17 July, 14 Aug. 4, 25 Sept. 1887.
51. See *Mahratta*, 10 April 1887; *Indian Spectator*, 9 May 1886.
52. K. C. Pandya, et. al., *Govardhan Madhavram Tripathi's Scrap Book 1894-1904*, Manuscript Volumes IV Part (II), V and VI, Bombay, 1959, p. 186.

Discussion

on Paper by Sudhir Chandra

RAVINDER KUMAR/ The creation and aggregation of political loyalties in the nation, for the purpose of nation-building, is an essential process. The success of a Gandhi in the situation, in contrast to Malabari, is therefore apparent.

S R MEHROTRA/ Sudhir should be cautioned on the use of *Mahratta* (the newspaper) on which he based his observations, for all views in these may not reflect the view of the editor, Tilak. After all, people held different views. For example, while Macaulay remarked that Hindu society is governed by the Hindu Shastras, B C Chatterjee said that Hindu society is governed by caste and not by the Hindu Shastras.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ The consistency of the argument as presented in Tilak's *Mahratta* has to be seen. This is evident in a number of articles. For example, on the 15th of October the 'Notes' of Malabari were published, which were totally supported by the *Mahratta*. But within a week the whole position is not only reviewed but radically altered. There is, however, no change in the position taken up by the *Mahratta* on social questions. It is, therefore, quite clear that there was consistency on matters of social reforms. This is why it does not matter whether Tilak was the actual author or not, since the policy corresponded to his views.

S C MISRA/ The problem should be related to dissent and protest. Why was it that nineteenth century reformers had to meet orthodoxy on its own grounds? Was it because the element of rationality was limited in the 'universe of discourse'? Could they not say that this is a social evil by its very nature, and therefore should be eradicated? Was it because the ideas of reform were limited in their minds, with limited objectives? For example, in the novel *Saraswati Chandra* by Govind Ram Tripathi, only certain aspects of social life were considered as evil, while others were not; he permits widow remarriage but prohibits Hindu-Muslim marriages. From this attitude one might say that the

approach of Gandhi in 1919 would have been impossible in the late nineteenth century. What this implies is that social reformers were not as radical as they seem to be made out and were presenting only partial solutions. It is in this context I feel that Behram Malabari was more of a fashionable social reformer than a radical one. Thus, what I am basically questioning is, why is it that only some social evils were perceived and not the others? Is this related to the domination of certain ideas, and is it not related to a social class? This is why I say that the whole problem was limited to the few urban middle-class people.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ Satish Misra's question clearly focuses on the nature and scope of the terms dissent, protest and reform which we have been using; and this is not mere a semantic problem. But I disagree that reformers have necessarily only to be radical. A reformer by definition is one who does not desire to totally restructure a social situation, but to correct it. Moreover, dissent or protest has to be seen in relation to the existing situations, the norms; it cannot be compared to what was there earlier, or came later. These reformers were trying to correct what they thought were social evils, traditions and customs. To my mind, if they were going back to earlier traditions, or seeking validation from earlier norms, this is also dissent. But it is important to note the means adopted and the motivation, because ideology becomes secondary and motivation the primary causation. This is why the kind of language or means adopted becomes crucial in achieving reforms, since communication with people to understand is important. There is no option here, because customs and traditions were very strong at that time; what other way was there to change the social situation of their constituency? These means had to be adopted, i.e., traditional means, even if the motivation was provided by rationality or any other reason. This then becomes a question of tactics and strategy.

As to the idea of the creation of political loyalties in the process of nation-building, these can not be accepted for the following two reasons:

1. Political loyalties and creation of political consciousness is a process of realization of common interests (like material interests) to get together and organize and formulate an ideology. In social reform no common interests are involved, only ideological commitments are important. It is a fragile base to create a group for it lacks common material interests.
2. In the creation of political consciousness there is an outside agency which facilitates the formation of group cohesion.

K J SHAH/ It has been suggested that since reformers were concerned only with social reform they did not succeed. On the other hand, since Gandhi was concerned with the whole political situation, he succeeded. But if he did succeed, was it not because of the events that were initiated earlier and also

because the social and political climate had changed in the meanwhile? The controversy arises because we are not clear as to whether social reforms should come first or political change. However, by the time Gandhiji assumed leadership this matter was settled though when he started his movement these questions were present. At the time of Tilak and other leaders, some understanding of the problem was beginning to take shape, especially among those leaders who were dominant in the Congress. Thus, the understanding of the situation had also improved; leaders began to see that social reforms could be used as an instrument of political change which in turn would support social reform. In contrast to this, if there was an opposition to social reform earlier, it was because it was seen as an attack on Hindu identity. A similar situation arises today when changes are visualized for Muslim reform that seem to threaten Muslim identity.

SURESH SHARMA/ Perhaps we may say that the earlier social reformers acted individually, though coming together but doing so without any overall vision of bringing about a change in the social process, or social actions.

Y B DAMLE/ The ambivalence of the elite social reformers, and the operations of rationality was due to various factors. The antagonism to social reforms was created largely by the British who wanted to preserve Hindu identity, and this resulted in ambivalence. This may not seem logical, but such action has to be seen from the view point of various sections which have different political and educational backgrounds whose support was taken. There is always a difference between ideology and conviction, and its social action. For instance, while Tilak opposed the Age of Consent Bill, he married off his own daughter at a much later age.

M S A RAO/ The entire problem of the emancipation of women in various religions was a concern of the upper classes. This is quite clear, specially in the total context of what happened in Madras and Bengal. In Madras, the case of Pantalu is instructive for he succeeded in prohibiting child marriage, and promoted widow remarriage.

Has Sudhir consulted Marathi sources, and whether the *Kesari* was established by then? If he had consulted them, would he have to alter his views?

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ I have not consulted literature in Marathi because I do not know Marathi. There were a number of anglo-vernacular papers published at the time. A number of orthodox papers were disturbed by the writings, as seen in *Indu Prakash* which was a reformist's paper. More investigations, I agree, are necessary.

As regards the problem raised by Misra, it was not a question of perception but a question of interest. It is remarkable that only certain reforms were championed by these English-educated reformers. For example, it is

surprising that female infanticide which was brought into prominent notice by the English in 1800 was only taken up as late as 1872 and 1874 and the Act was passed albeit with indifferent support. I feel that this is because they failed to perceive it at an earlier time due to class and communal interests. However, the evil remained in the Indian States.

P H PRABHU/ Some attempts to answer Ravinder Kumar's question may be made: Why is it that the various attempts of social reformers in India have failed, while Gandhi succeeded in introducing a number of social reforms rapidly, such as emancipation of women, untouchability, education, and so on? If Gandhi succeeded, it was not merely because he preached and practised sound humanitarian principles, but also because he knew, like a social psychologist, how to touch the right cord at the right moment. No doubt, he stood on the shoulders of several other social reformers preceding him. But this is not by itself a particularly important reason for his success, because Indian history abounds in examples of social reformers, dissenters who failed to eradicate social evils because they could not do much beyond preaching. On the other hand, Gandhiji carefully and meticulously established a kind of a *gestalt*; a system of behaviour modes and models in various areas, such that all of them were linked together with the central theme of activity he was primarily leading, i.e., the political emancipation of the country, for which he had gained both experience and some success in South Africa. For example, the emancipation of women, or that all men, regardless of caste, creed and religion, must be treated as equal—the basis on which he took up the cause of the untouchables or Harijans. This, again, was necessary for political mobilization although it cannot be said that the latter was the primary objective of Gandhi. Again, his views even on a variety of aspects of *vichara* as well as *achara*, such as wearing of clothes, reliance upon nature's remedial action in case of diseases, not to speak of his views on education, food habits and celibacy, thus began to be respected and actively followed by many people.

Thus, in Gandhi's success in achieving social reforms the two factors of the process of linking up the aspects of behaviour together in a kind of a *gestalt* or configuration had existed. Like Gandhi, if, for example, Tilak who also had a 'halo' around him in the eyes of the people, were to take up the cause of social reform he too would have succeeded, whereas men like Agarkar, Bhandarkar and Ranade in Maharashtra did not succeed because these were names which meant something only to a few select intellectuals.

There are other reasons which added to the 'halo' effect around Gandhi's personality. He became a living embodiment of the highest ideal of man in the eyes of the Indians, the *sanyasin* or the *pir*, the ascetic the renouncer of worldly ties, who had abandoned the pleasures of *grihasthasrama*; and yet, he also proved, through his political activities and intense interest in the welfare of his countrymen and fellow beings, that he had dedicated his life to the people's cause. Thus, he made the cause of political independence of his

countrymen a human cause, not just a political cause. Both these ideals of life of *tapas-charya*, as it were, are looked upon as the culmination of spiritual attainment which is most difficult for mortal beings to reach. A life of dedicated service to humanity, and suffering for it, is looked upon as losing one's identity, as *atmahuti*, self-sacrifice, as a merging of one's self into the ocean of the souls of fellow beings.

In the West, the latter style of life—philosophy—and behaviour in a man would be as highly appreciated as it is in India. But the former style of being and behaving may not be particularly cared for in the West, while it is supremely appreciated in India. Gandhi coupled both the styles in his thought and action, and this had a total effect in creating a strong 'halo' of reverence around him endowing him with a certain authority in whatever he said and did. This recognition was there not only in the minds of the unsophisticated majority of illiterate and half-literate Indians, but also among the highly sophisticated few who had initially laughed at him and ridiculed his programmes. When he achieved results which the highly sophisticated people particularly steeped in Western education had never dreamt he could, they too gathered around him full of deep respect for him.

All this has a lesson for us. If dissent and protest have to lead to success, the leader must possess perceptive ability to understand human psychology and make an impression on the minds of men, in an appropriate manner and at the appropriate time. Gandhi very significantly used to talk of 'a change of heart', which in psychological parlance means a change in attitudes and perception that would effectively counteract and eliminate old prejudices. And, he worked all through on this basis, whether in politics or in social reform. Where highly intellectual and purely rational argument has failed, where legislation cannot succeed, only psychological approaches based on an understanding of the working of the human mind can be effective.

Ravinder Kumar

The Transformation of Rural Protest in India

IN HIS CLASSIC ESSAY ON *Peasant Revolts in China*, JEAN CHESNEAUX EXAMINES THE historical tradition of rural protest in China.¹ He does so in order to highlight the legacy which made possible the transformation of the country, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, under the aegis of a peasant based Marxist movement. The principal theme of Chesneaux's essay runs along the following lines. The peasants of China, Chesneaux argues, would yield without much resistance their surplus produce to the State under conditions of plenty. But in times of scarcity, when the exactions of the State trenched upon what the peasants needed for their bare subsistence, they would take recourse in large numbers to 'banditry on the hills'. Such 'bandits', assisted by secret societies, whose numbers could swell enormously in times of distress, through the recruitment of tens upon thousands of starving peasants, would proceed to challenge the political authority of the Emperor, and on occasions bring about a dynastic revolution. The tragedy of China, so Chesneaux argues, lay in that the 'bandits' knew of no political system other than what they sought to destroy, with the result that the polity established by a successful 'bandit' inevitably turned out to be a faithful copy of the system which had been displaced. One peasant revolt succeeded another, therefore, without bringing about any qualitative change in the structure of Chinese society. Yet once the revolutionary potential of the peasant was harnessed by a well organized Marxist movement, China was able to break through centuries of stagnation to restructure herself on novel principles of social and political organization.

Chesneaux's critique of the nature of peasant unrest in China, and its contemporaneous transformation into a powerful revolutionary movement, offers us a convenient point of departure for examining the quality of rural protest in India over the past two hundred years. Rural protest, for the purposes of this essay, is the resistance which peasants offer to the expropriation of their surplus by their superiors in the hierarchy of society. In the pages which follow, it is proposed to look at the manner in which the rural classes in our

country, which were involved in the creation of agricultural wealth, sought to protect their interests from the exactions of their landlords, or the State. It is argued, that like China, there were clearly established conventions of rural protest in our country; and further, that again like China, the traditional forms of protest never really challenged the presuppositions of political society in India. It is also my belief that with the emergence of nationalism in the twentieth century, more particularly, the variety of nationalism associated with Gandhi, the restlessness of the rural classes was drawn into the great agitations which were launched against the British Government in India. Yet the Gandhian agitations, with their emphasis on cooperation between different classes in rural no less than in urban society, and on the trusteeship of wealth, drew broad sections of the cultivating classes into the nationalist movement without bringing about any qualitative transformation in the nature of rural protest. It remained the task of radical ideologies, which took root in the second quarter of the twentieth century, but which expressed themselves with vigour only in the decades after 1947, to bring about a fundamental change in the expression of rural protest in India.

I

To understand the tradition of rural protest in India, we can do no better than look at the social turbulence which characterized rural society in large sections of the country in the eighteenth century, and which the British encountered in one region after another when they sought to establish their *imperium* over the subcontinent. The quality of this social turbulence was determined as much by the administrative and political superstructure which the Mughal emperors had built in the country, as it was determined by the infrastructure of kinship groups and cultivating classes which wrestled for control over land and its produce at the level of local society, within the villages.

The administrative structure of the Mughal Empire is too well-known a subject for me to dwell upon at any great length. But it is only very recently that historians have gained an insight into the texture of local society in the eighteenth century, or earlier, and the manner in which this society was integrated into the administrative structure of the Mughal Empire. Perhaps the seminal contribution here is Nurul Hasan's article entitled 'Zamindars Under the Mughals', in which he demonstrates how zamindars of different orders of importance—from chieftains in control of vast districts, through intermediaries who lorded over groups of villages, to landholders with proprietary rights over estates within villages—were drawn into the Mughal administration at the level of the *pargana*, or the *sarkar*, or even the *subah*, and could form parts of jagirdaris with the same facility with which they could be the constituents of *khalisa* territories.²

The tensions which characterized rural society in the eighteenth century lead us to examine the structure of local society within the Mughal *imperium*.

We have in a number of excellent studies relating to the texture of local society in the rural districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra, a revealing picture of how land was controlled in the villages, and who appropriated what portion of the agricultural produce.³ It is clear from these studies that over vast tracts of the country, powerful kinship groups of Brahmans, or Bhumiards, or Rajputs, or Pathans, exercised control over the villages in the capacity of village zamindars, and paid their dues to the State, either directly through officers of revenue, or indirectly through the instrumentality of leading kinsmen whose titles varied from one region to another. Besides these village zamindars, there also existed cultivating classes like the Jats of northern India, or the Kunbis of western India, and a host of others, whose members owned land on a more modest scale than the village zamindars, and amongst whom the leadership principle was less clearly institutionalized than it was amongst the village zamindars.

The nature of social conflict and rural protest in the regions controlled by the village zamindars was qualitatively different from conflict and protest in the regions controlled by the cultivating classes, and this difference flowed from the manner in which land was controlled and agricultural produce shared in these regions. The village zamindars, as their name suggests, were relatively substantial men, and a couple of such zamindars, at times even a single one, controlled an entire village. Besides, the village zamindars, almost without exception, left the unpleasant business of cultivation to lowly fellow villagers drawn from castes like the Kurmis, or Ahirs, or Chamars, on terms which varied from agrestic slavery through share-cropping to tenancy at will. Again, although the village zamindars as a class sought to reduce, or to abolish altogether, the dues which they were required to pay to the State, they subjected their lowly fellow villagers to the grossest forms of exploitation.

The texture of rural society in the regions controlled by the cultivating classes, like the Jats or the Kunbis, was quite different from the texture of rural society in the zamindari areas. The members of such cultivating classes, as we have already emphasized, possessed holdings in land considerably smaller than the holdings of the village zamindars. A Jat village, or a Kunbi village, was likely to contain twenty to thirty proprietors, in contrast to the two or three owners in a typical zamindari village. And although tenants at will and even agricultural labourers abounded in such villages, the cultivating classes as a rule engaged themselves directly in the business of agriculture. If we are permitted to draw upon concepts relevant to rural social structure in the West, then the village zamindars, in the sense in which we use the term, looked upon themselves as a landed gentry, while the Jats or the Kunbis conceived of themselves as a class of peasant-proprietors.

II

As the Pax Britannica spread over the subcontinent, the opposition which the articulate sections of rural society offered to the new rulers highlights the

varieties of protest, or self-assertion, or even violent resistance, which obtained in the country. Thus when the British encountered the Rajput or Brahman zamindars who claimed for themselves proprietary rights over the fertile districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh, they ran into a variety of local resistance the like of which they had not experienced at all in other regions of India.

The quality of such zamindari resistance to the British is best illustrated by the case of the Sengar Rajputs of Lakhnessar, a *pargana* in the Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. The Sengar Rajputs, who numbered about 32,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, controlled over 35,000 acres of land in Lakhnessar.⁴ Before the British advent in the region, Balwant Singh (1740-70), the Raja of Banaras, who had secured *amildari* rights over Ballia and the neighbouring districts, tried to dispossess the Sengar Rajputs of their land through military force. But the refractory spirit of the Sengars, each members of which clan 'was in the habit of turning his household into a military stronghold',⁵ proved too much for the Raja, and he agreed to settle with them, as a corporate body, for a consolidated sum of Rs. 20,000 per annum, in token acknowledgement of his overlordship. When the British acquired control over Ballia, their experience with the Sengar Rajputs was no different. Jonathan Duncan, the Collector of Banaras, therefore, found it expedient to continue the policy of the Raja, and settled with the Sengars for the same sum of money without enquiring too closely into the productive potential of the *pargana*. Indeed, even after half-a-century of British dominion, a Commissioner of Banaras confessed that Lakhnessar remained 'a terra incognita, which has yet to be subjected to British rule.... (The *pargana*) is free from the nuisances of revenue and civil court administration.... There are no shares, no boundaries, no patwaris' papers, no sales, no executions, nothing to designate the *pargana* as a British possession'.⁶

A comparable phenomenon was observable in the territories of the Nawab of Oudh towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The crucial factor which shaped politics in Oudh, in the period under review, was the progressive encroachment on the Nawab's authority by the British, who constituted, in the words of one scholar, an 'alternative power structure'⁷ which prevented the ruler from asserting himself over his Rajput zamindars. The progressive erosion in the Nawab's authority, and the corresponding rise in the power and wealth of the Rajput zamindars of the region, was vividly described to the British Resident, W. H. Sleeman, by a court official in 1852:

'Fifty years ago, Sir, (stated the Oudh courtier), when I used to move about the country, in circuit, with Sadat Ali Khan, the then sovereign, there were many Rajput landholders in Oudh, stronger than any that defy the government now; but they dared not then hold their heads as high as they do now.(Today, the Rajput landholders) despise the Oudh Government, and many of them resist its most moderate demands. The revenues of the State

fall off as the armed bands of the landholders increase; and many families, who in his (i.e., Sadat Ali Khan's) time kept only fifty armed men, have now five hundred, or even a thousand or two thousand, and spend what they owe to government in maintaining them. To pay such bands, they withhold the just demands of the State, rob their weaker neighbours, and plunder men of substance wherever they can find them'.⁸

The state of anarchy in Oudh, in which the hand of each Rajput landholder was turned against the State, and zamindars fought against each other, giving no quarter and expecting none, would have led to the eventual displacement of the Nawab by a successful zamindar in centuries prior to the nineteenth century, but the support which the British extended to the Nawab, while depriving him of authority, kept the ruling dynasty in tenuous control over Oudh. Thus, the dynasty was maintained at the price of acute and chronic misgovernment in the region.

We are now in a position to venture upon a few generalizations about the nature of zamindari protest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first point to be made here is that we can associate the term protest with zamindars—even the village zamindars—only with the most serious qualifications. Since the consolidation of a State, whether it be a regional or an imperial polity, required the imposition of central authority over the zamindars, their resistance to such authority can, in a sense, be described as a legitimate form of protest. But even if we accept the legitimacy of zamindari protest, two aspects of what we have described above need to be emphasized. First, it is important to remember that the village zamindars were themselves exploiters in relation to the lowly cultivators, artisans and untouchables who resided in the villages under their control. Such lowly classes, the truly exploited sections of rural society, were too weak, and helpless, and socially fragmented, to offer any resistance, either to their immediate superiors, or to the State. Nevertheless, their muted voice of protest is discernible in the assertion of a Chamar that 'being in a village with Rajputs is like being in a thorn bush'.⁹ Distinct from the exploitative role of the village zamindars, is the question of their political vision. It is clear that like the Chinese 'bandits' who revolted against the authority of the Emperor, these zamindars knew of no political system other than the one which they sought to overthrow. The quality of conflict which characterized the world of the zamindars has been portrayed by Bernard Cohn in his essay on the Raja of Banaras, who, on the one hand, fought against the Nawab of Oudh, and, on the other, asserted his supremacy over the minor Rajput landholders of the region.¹⁰ The limited horizons of zamindari protest, therefore, were as much a political reality in India as the limited horizons of those Chinese 'bandits' who revolted against the Son of Heaven in Peking, only to create a polity which imitated, in its seminal features, all the characteristics of the system which they had overthrown.

III

We shall now consider the nature of rural protest in those regions of India where local society was dominated by agricultural classes like the Jats of northern India, or the Kunbis of western India. It should already be clear, from the structural differences between zamindari villages and villages dominated by the cultivating classes, that the tone of social protest amongst the latter would be quite different from that amongst the former. Yet we would like to argue, that this difference lay more in the 'populist' content of Jat or Kunbi protest, than in its ideological orientation. In other words, like the Rajput or Brahman zamindars, the Jats and the Kunbis were unable to conceive a political system radically different from the system against which they revolted. However, since the cultivating classes were more thickly distributed within the villages than the zamindars, it is my belief that Jat or Kunbi rebellions were more difficult to control than rebellions in zamindari areas.

The refractory quality which characterized the protest of the cultivating classes has been highlighted by Irfan Habib in his work on *The Agrarian Structure of the Mughal Empire*.¹¹ It is clear from this, as well as from some studies of the eighteenth century,¹² that apart from political mismanagement by the later Mughal Emperors, which led to a crisis in the jagirdari system, the breakdown of the Mughal *imperium* was equally a result of peasant uprisings against the Empire—uprisings in which two of the cultivating classes already mentioned, namely, the Jats and the Kunbis, feature very prominently.

We shall not say very much about the Jat uprisings against the Mughal Empire, whether it be the Sikh Jat rebellion of the Punjab, or the Hindu Jat rebellion in the districts around Delhi, beyond focusing attention on them as a species of protest involving the cultivating classes, as we have defined the term. But there is something to say about the uprising of the Kunbis of western India, if only for the reason that we are marginally acquainted with this movement against the Mughal Empire.

When the attention of historians was first drawn to the resistance which the Kunbis of the Deccan offered to the Mughal Empire, scholars like Mahadev Govind Ranade focused upon the role which popular religion, and the teachings of the folk saints of the region, played in the conflict.¹³ We have little reason to reject altogether the part which 'Maharashtra Dharma', as Ranade defined the populist religious ethic of the region, played in moulding the anti-Mughal uprising in the Deccan. This is particularly true of the *dharkari* movement of Ramdas, a militant form of *bhakti*, which was initiated in the rural districts around Poona at the same time as Shivaji was gathering around himself the peasant army which formed the basis of his power.¹⁴ Yet any exclusively religious interpretation of Shivaji's uprising may be looked upon as a wholly misleading interpretation. Shivaji's initial, and in many respects his most bitter enemies, were the Hindu territorial chiefs of the region around Poona, like the Mores of Jaoli, or the Ghorpades of Mudhol.¹⁵ These Hindu Chiefs,

who had been drawn into the territories of the ruler of Bijapur, were not above allying themselves with their Muslim suzerain in order to crush a co-religionist whom they regarded as a dangerous upstart, and who threatened their autonomy in a way it was not threatened by the ruler of Bijapur. Shivaji's political career can, in fact, be divided into three distinct phases. Initially, Shivaji fought and defeated the Hindu chiefs of the Poona region; next, he was drawn into a conflict with Bijapur; and finally, he took up arms against the Mughal Emperor. Such a career of aggrandizement can hardly be regarded as the profile of a Hindu crusader against the armed hosts of Islam in the subcontinent.

A more revealing picture of Shivaji's rise to power comes to light if we examine the structure of local society in Maharashtra.¹⁶ It is clear from our appreciation of the seventeenth century that the villages of the Deccan were inhabited by lineages of Kunbis whose heads fought amongst themselves for offices of prestige and power like the patilship. A typical village contained twenty to thirty Kunbi proprietors, who were divided into two or three lineages. A group of such villages constituted the smallest territorial unit of the administration, a unit which was often under the charge of a *deshmukh*. The armies of Shivaji were drawn from such Kunbi proprietors, men who had in all probability been exposed to the teachings of the *dharkari* movement, and were, therefore, a formidable force when led by a leader of military skill. In leading the Kunbis of the Deccan, initially against the local chiefs of the region, next against Bijapur, and finally, against the Mughals, Shivaji drew upon the opposition of the Kunbis to the collection of a tax on the land, plus the sense of identity which the folk saints had bestowed upon them. It is also clear that such uprisings possessed a populist strength which was conspicuous by its absence in the case of movements led by the Rajput or Brahman landed gentry of Uttar Pradesh. Yet it is important to remember that such uprisings, whether of the Jats, or of the Kunbis, were no different from the movements of the landed gentry in their ideological orientation. For the leaders of these peasant based movements, when successful, created polities no different from the polities which they destroyed; and in doing so, they weakened the bases of their strength.

IV

Despite the emphasis we have placed upon peasant uprisings as a form of rural protest, the cultivating classes took to rebellion against their rulers far less frequently than we may have implied. To protect their produce from arbitrary appropriation by the State, the cultivating classes adopted, far more frequently, a variety of techniques, ranging from mass migration, through passive resistance to token or symbolic violence. And although such habits of protest had taken root in medieval times, if not earlier, the British experienced them in full force when they sought to establish their rule over the regions controlled by the cultivating classes.

Perhaps the quality of such peasant resistance can best be illustrated through the problems faced by the pioneering British administrators who sought to establish the *Pax Britannica*, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, over the rural districts around Delhi, or over the territories ceded by Baji Rao Peshwa. The villages around Delhi were dominated by lineages of Jat peasant-proprietors, who had, towards the end of the eighteenth century, when Mughal authority had become very weak, reduced the business of resisting the revenue demands of the State to a fine art.¹⁷ The choudhuries of the Jat villages, who were often the senior members of the various lineages, played a number of roles as the repositories of local power. But their key role—one which called for the political skills of a very high order—was to determine the tax obligations of the village in negotiations with the *amildar*. The options open to a choudhury, in reaching such a settlement, were varied, and his political finesse lay in exercising the right option. More often than not, the *amildar* appeared with a military contingent to collect the dues of the village. But such a show of force seldom decided anything. An astute choudhury would often bribe the troops accompanying the *amildar* to turn against their master, and even collect a ransom for granting the latter his freedom! If the troops proved loyal, then the choudhury and his fellows would retire behind the mud fortifications of their village, in the hope of exhausting the patience of the Mughal collector. Alternatively, the *amildar* could be persuaded, needless to say for a handsome consideration, to let the village off lightly. There were no fixed rules which determined relations between the village choudhuries and the officers of revenue, and the skill of the former lay in their ability to secure the lowest possible settlement of tax for their clients, the proprietary body of the village. The choudhuries of the villages around Delhi were so accustomed to the employment of dilatory tactics in their dealings with the *amildars*, that after 1803 they treated the revenue officers of the British Government in a similar fashion, without at all appreciating the administrative style of the new rulers. 'Many village Napoleons met their Waterloos in the early years of British rule', states one scholar, 'because they did not realise that British resources and persistence were much greater than those of their predecessors'.¹⁸

If British officers of revenue delivered the *coup de grace* to the 'village Napoleons' around Delhi in a short span of time, then this was contrary to what their peers achieved in the territories ceded by Baji Rao Peshwa in 1818. Indeed, the Kunbis of the Deccan offered very stubborn resistance to the British, partly because the new rulers were inclined to assess the villages of the region at exorbitant rates, and partly also because they collected the land-tax with a rigorousness which was unknown under the administration of the Peshwas.

The temper of the Kunbis of the Deccan was revealed to British officers as soon as John Briggs, the Collector of Khandesh, made a revenue settlement of his district in 1822.¹⁹ When Briggs' superior, William Chaplin, the Commissioner of the Deccan, toured the district shortly afterwards, he found the Kunbis in a highly agitated frame of mind. What Chaplin discovered in the village

of Bhanmod, for instance, was typical of the effect of Briggs' settlement on the district as a whole. As Chaplin journeyed to Bhanmod, he was met on the outskirts of the village by an outraged group of fifty or sixty Kunbis 'who were loud in their outcry against the new classification and assessment'²⁰ since their burden of tax had been raised by fifty to sixty per cent. Chaplin was so struck by the Kunbis' reaction to the new rates of taxation that he warned Briggs not to make any alteration in their customary dues to the State without prior consultation:²¹

'It must be considered a revenue axiom (William Chaplin pointed out) that no settlement that is not conducted with the general assent of the village authorities and the great body of the ryots can possess any stability. The classification and the assessment of the lands must therefore be made in a great measure by the corporation of each separate village'.

The resistance offered by the Kunbis of Khandesh pales into insignificance when compared with the resistance offered by the Kunbis of Indapur, a taluka of Poona District, where the scales of taxation were enhanced by Robert Keith Pringle, the Superintendent of the Revenue Survey and Assessment of the Deccan in 1928.²² Pringle was a doctrinaire Utilitarian, and he applied the Ricardian Law of Rent to fix the obligations of the Kunbis to the State, thrusting aside in the process the customary rates of taxation in the Deccan. The effect of Pringle's survey was to drastically alter the burden of tax on the cultivating classes of Indapur, and they resisted his proceedings through migrating in large numbers to the neighbouring districts controlled by the Nizam of Hyderabad. All this is vividly reflected in the fate of one rural community which was utterly devastated as a result of the measures adopted by Pringle:

'One of the most heavily assessed village is Oolhi, distance from Sholapur eight miles (stated a British civilian who looked into the effects of Pringle's policies). The rate here is Rs. 2 10 as. per acre. This place I well recall a flourishing village seven years ago, it had a couple of shops, and was to all appearances populous. It is now mostly deserted. The shops are ruined, all the trees disappeared, walls down and the place in ruins; and of 4,000 acres 2,475 are waste; revenue fallen from Rs. 1,066 to Rs. 618. Patil and kulkarni both ruined, being involved in defalcations they could not prevent. An acting patil and kulkarni doing duty, and an outstanding balance of Rs. 3,466. Several of the villagers now cultivate in the neighbouring villages.... The rest of the over-assessed and mis-classed villages have all partaken more or less similar ruin and misery....'²³

By adopting the techniques which we have described above, the peasant-proprietors in different parts of India were often quite successful in limiting the exactions of the State. Those who appropriated the surplus from the peasants were aware of the limits to which they could squeeze them without

diminishing returns setting in. The British, too, learnt very quickly what they could and could not extract from the tillers of the soil, and this knowledge exercised a salutary restraint upon the demands they made on the cultivators. The peasant, the British realized, was like the proverbial goose which laid golden eggs. Squeezed too hard, he was likely to defeat the designs of his oppressor through a policy of passive resistance, and on occasions he would even rise in open rebellion against him.

V

It should be clear from the preceding account that the classes which controlled land within local society were, despite their ideological myopia, quick to defend their interests through a variety of means whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself. Such a portrayal of the village zamindars, or the cultivating classes, is at variance with the stereotype of a quietist rural society which was uncritically accepted by scholars till fairly recently, and which still finds a faint echo in a work of distinction like Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship*.

Nothing has done more to propagate this myth of a quietist rural society than the fact that, nearer our own times, the articulate sections of rural society in India are known to have responded to the leadership of Gandhi, who is credited, and rightly too, with elevating non-violence into a potent weapon of politics. However, we would like to argue that Gandhi drew his support, in rural society, from social classes which were the reverse of quietist; and we would further argue, that such social classes accepted Gandhi's lead because their position in local society rendered his ideas eminently acceptable to them.

To substantiate this we can do no better than take a close look at two rural agitations which are classically Gandhian, namely, the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 and the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928. Champaran is a district in north Bihar which had been permanently settled into three large zamindaris.²⁴ These zamindaris were subdivided and leased out to European planters, who originally supervised the cultivation of indigo, but who preferred to act as rent-receiving intermediaries, once a technological revolution made the plantation of indigo an uneconomic proposition. The basis of unrest in Champaran lay in the conflict between the Bhumihar tenants and the European planters, who forced the latter to pay them exorbitant *abwabs* or illegal cesses, over and above the rents which they had contracted to pay. This conflict erupted into violence in 1907-08, involving the murder of a European factory manager, and 'a mass movement covering an area of four hundred miles of the district, where the raiyats organised the boycott of European factories, held meetings and threatened violence.'²⁵ A British Collector wrote about Champaran in 1911: 'I am more than ever convinced ... that the whole district will be thrown into a blaze'.²⁶

When the violence organized by the Bhumihars of Champaran failed to achieve any results, beyond provoking brutal repression by the British Government,

they turned to the political leaders of the day for a solution. The men who took such an initiative were more than just ignorant cultivators of indigo. Instead, they were men of some means and substance, 'money-lenders, businessmen and landholders,'²⁷ who found that the European planters prevented them from consolidating their hold over the region, by 'interfering with a free and unrestricted transfer of tenants' property into their hands.'²⁸ Typical of such men was Raj Kumar Sukul, who is described by one scholar as 'a well-to-do middle class peasant and moneylender.'²⁹ Sukul proceeded to the Lucknow Session of the Indian National Congress in 1916 to present the case of Champaran before the leading political figures of the day. At Lucknow he met Gandhi, and persuaded him to visit Champaran, with results which form a part of the history of the nationalist movement in India.

The limited objectives with which Gandhi drew the articulate sections of rural society into his nationalist agitations are equally well illustrated by the Bardoli Satyagraha. The taluka of Bardoli, a revenue subdivision of Surat District, was the base of a vigorous cultivating class, the Patidars, who controlled most of the land in the region.³⁰ Bardoli was a *ryotwari* area, in which the Patidars paid their tax dues directly to the British Government. They also exploited, in the capacity of agricultural labourers, the Kaliparaj or scheduled tribe residents of the region, who constituted roughly half the population of the taluka, and whose lowly status has been admirably described in a recent anthropological study.³¹

When the British Government introduced the *ryotwari* system in western India, it had acted in the belief that it would ensure the stability of the Raj through creating a prosperous rural society based upon the social conservatism of peasant proprietors like the Patidars of Gujarat. There is no reason to believe that this was a mistaken policy on their part. For the peasant societies which the British promoted in western India, and elsewhere, were fairly stable societies. But the revision of the tax obligations of a *ryotwari* district—a process which took place every twenty-five years—inevitably drew upon the British Government the hostility of the propertied rural classes. Such a measure presented the British officers with awkward problems of political control, just as it offered the nationalist leaders an opportunity to stage agitations resting upon popular disaffection.

It was in this context that the revenue rates paid by the Patidars of Bardoli were raised by thirty per cent in 1925. Long before such an upward revision of the land taxes, a local Patidar leader of Bardoli, one Kunvarjibhai V Mehta, had created a powerful organization in the taluka called the Patidar Yuvak Mandal. Kunvarjibhai drew the Mandal behind the Mahatma, and he took a leading role in preparing Bardoli for a 'no tax' campaign which was postponed in 1922 because of the Chauri Chaura incident. However, the upward revision of the revenue rates in 1925 reactivated the Patidars of Bardoli, and their leaders, prominent amongst them Kunvarjibhai, requested Vallabh-bhai Patel, who too was a Patidar, to lead an agitation against the British

Government, with the object of securing a diminution in their scales of taxation. The Bardoli Satyagraha, which was remarkable for the solidarity which the Patidars exhibited against the British, largely succeeded in its objectives. Yet it is important to remember, that the Satyagraha did very little to alleviate the sufferings of the lowly Kaliparaj, who cultivated the fields of the Patidars under conditions which entirely suited their masters.

VI

It should be clear from the rural agitations which we have described above, namely, the satyagrahas of Champaran and Bardoli, that there was nothing particularly non-violent about the rural classes which adopted the techniques of Gandhi in order to further their economic interests. In both the cases we have cited above, particularly in Champaran, there is clear evidence of social turbulence and social violence preceding the satyagraha movement. Indeed, we would not be wholly unjustified in asserting that the rural classes which followed Gandhi were, in fact, particularly turbulent classes. And they chose to follow the Mahatma, because his methods looked eminently practical, and more importantly, because they did not pose any threat to their privileged position in the context of local society. The idea of non-violence and the related concept of trusteeship of wealth, were very reassuring notions for the Patidars of Gujarat, and the more substantial cultivators of Champaran, who dominated the landless classes in their regions, and had little reason to welcome a social revolution.

If we have given the impression in the foregoing paragraph, that the nationalist movement in India, as it affected social protest and social conflict in rural society, was dominated exclusively by Gandhian notions of class harmony and class cooperation, then we would like to correct such an impression. A number of political leaders were quick to seize upon the consequences of Gandhian ideas in a social context characterized by extreme inequalities of wealth. Prominent among such leaders was Jawaharlal Nehru. In his presidential address to the Indian National Congress at Lahore, Nehru attacked those who defended the *status quo* in rural society in the belief that the zamindars could be persuaded to utilize their wealth for the benefit of their poorer fellows:

‘The Congress, it is said (Nehru pointed out) must hold the balance between ... zamindar and tenant. But the balance has been, and is, weighted on one side, and to maintain the *status quo* is to maintain injustice and exploitation. The only way to right it is to do away with the domination of one class over another.

Paternalism ... in the land is but a form of charity with all its sting and its utter incapacity to root out the evil. The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustees, and they may exercise

it as they will. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation.'³²

The idea so forcefully voiced by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1929, that the *status quo* in the villages was intolerable, and that a structural transformation of rural society was highly desirable, was a basic article of faith with the radical leadership which emerged both within and without the Indian National Congress in the 1930s. This leadership sought to politicize the exploited sections of rural society, and to consolidate their strength in bodies like the Kisan Sabhas, whose objective was to eliminate exploitation in the villages, and thereby ensure the fruits of their labour for the under-privileged rural classes.

Prior to 1947, the class struggle which the radical leadership sought to unleash in the villages was somewhat muted as a result of the conflict between the different constituents of the nationalist movement, on the one hand, and the British Government, on the other. But after 1947, this conflict flared into the open, and the radical leaders launched a number of agrarian struggles, of which the Telangana Uprising, and the more recent Naxalite Rebellion, were the most prominent. At the same time, the leadership of the Indian National Congress, too, has attempted to utilize popular democracy and the parliamentary process to bring about a qualitative transformation of social relations in rural society. If the attempt to resolve the problems of rural society through the parliamentary process succeeds, then we shall see the dawn of social peace in our villages, a peace in which agricultural productivity will be substantially enhanced. Otherwise, to quote the prophetic words of James Baldwin, the distinguished spokesman of Negro protest, 'It shall be the fire the next time'.³³

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Discussion

on Paper by Ravinder Kumar

K SURESH SINGH/ Further details should be given, if the entire framework of the paper is agrarian. In the context of the statement that Kisan Sabha went to the defence of the exploited, right from the middle of the nineteenth century there was a 'pre-Naxalite' movement whose emphasis depended upon different types of persons who were leading them. In fact, Swami Shradhananda makes a very clear distinction between *Kisan* and *Khet Majdoor*, and he too had emphasized *Kisan*.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ I agree with the first point, I could not cover all aspects in such a short paper. As regards the second point, in what I may call feudal socialism in Bihar politics, this could be seen in the Bihar Congress from 1937 with the spectre of revolution that faces them. In 1935 *Kisans* were breathing down their necks, and this is much clearer in Bihar than in Uttar Pradesh.

Y B DAMLE/ Did the Congress in its policy of legislations in Bihar, and in trying to utilize democratic popular vote, achieve success or did it fail? I feel, it was a failure.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ Basically I agree with you, though I tried to compress a decade's development into one sentence which has not been quite clear. But I have been trying to focus on the intention of certain elements in the Congress which were trying to bring about change rather than impress with achievement, which is another matter.

S C MISRA/ Ravinder Kumar has very correctly brought in a strata of society—the rural and the peasant sections—which we seem to have ignored, and brought in a theoretical framework which is important for us to bear in mind. For example, he has shown that there can be protest without dissent, specially against injustices. With reference to China as he has stated, there are parallels in rural unrest and protest in medieval India, which took place in Saurashtra

in the pre-industrial era. A common form of it is a physical migration or running away by cultivators from the villages in protest against their oppressors. They may even run away from one zamindar to another. Many of these discontent-movements have taken place in the form of Satnamis, Faraizi and others, which have a religious colouring. These modes of protest may also be a part of rural unrest, and should be considered.

However, is it possible to explain how in a very violent country, non-violence has been imposed on it? For example, the Bardoli movement in Gujarat was organized for a certain political mobilization by Sardar Patel due to the apparent increase of rent by the government. The rent increase was not so exorbitant to call for an agitation. But it was used for political purposes by Sardar Patel who had a influence in that area. This may be an example of imposing Western ideas of satyagraha and others on the Indian scene. This was a strategic move, which also took place in the Rajkot movement at that time. Was this a genuine political protest? Of course, not only did it affect the richer peasants economically, but to some extent the poorer peasants also because of the political orientation. But in all this, such traditional means as devotional music, bhajans, social boycott, etc., have been used. Would one, therefore, say that rural protest in the context of Ravinder Kumar's paper was a genuine one, or was it one of strategy for political mobilization, for the benefit of the elite?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ With regard to the Bardoli movement, I think the matter is not so simple. If we view the entire British policy from the nineteenth century, especially of resettlement of peasants in terms of revenue—land—within the *ryotwari* system; all this created turbulence in each of the districts where this happened. This specially happens when there is confusion of political policies and decisions, more so at the higher level of authority. During these times the rural areas were seething with agitation. In the twentieth century, since there is a political organization, and leadership which has been able to mobilize this turbulence for political purposes, leaders besides Gandhi made use of this. The emphasis, therefore, has to be on resettlement and tax policy, which began earlier in the beginning of the century. This is why disturbances took place in southern and western India wherever these resettlement policies were taking place; whenever any kind of agitation took place these rural sections were drawn into it. This fact was made use of by political leadership wherever such revision of settlement and tax took place. Otherwise, elsewhere, in areas where this resettlement had not taken place, political agitation was not a success.

The problem of understanding the horizontal spread of protest in rural areas everywhere is a difficult one. Even though rural India is a very violent strata, yet it is trapped in local societies. I am talking about structural violence and not physical violence; and this in the context of Misra's referring to the imposition of a non-violent method on a violent society. In China, for

instance, there used to be greater interaction and dominance of rural areas, so that in times of economic distress rural areas rose in protest—rebellion—and this spread and threatened urban areas. This feature is absent in India.

S C MISRA/ Historically events are better recorded in China—even insignificant ones are recorded—than in India. This is probably because our historians are urban-oriented. Both Indian and Chinese societies are basically agrarian, but structural controls are stronger in India than in China.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ I believe that China was politically and administratively much better organized than India before the twentieth century. This organization of Chinese society cut both ways; that is, the urban areas controlled the villages but the latter also effected urban areas. I think the largest peasant uprising in India came in 1857 rather than in 1942, because the British had intervened to organize politically and administratively.

PUSHPA SURI/ The phenomenon of peasant migration during times of tax collection or revenues, etc., exists even in the medieval period. It was a big problem, and needs to be taken into account.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ There is, of course, a variety of peasant resistance, I entirely agree, and migration was an important one. For example, and this is wellknown, when peasants flee from British territories to Nizam's areas in 19th century, this is a strong indictment of the British. To me the problem can be explained very simply. Whenever somebody took large chunks of the peasants crops, there was an agitation. This is quite normal. But this agitation took place in moments of political weakening of the authority. One of the forms which may be a passive form of protest, was that of migration. As regards the non-violent aspects of Gandhi's agitation, it took firmer roots amongst the Pathans who are not exactly a non-violent type. There is much more evidence of this sort, which requires further work.

SUDHIR GHANDRA/ With reference to 1857, one may look into the Minutes of Lord Canning, for something similar took place in Oudh. When after 1857, Outh was annexed Lord Canning did away with the talukdars, expecting the ryots to support the British. This did not happen. Here, we must look into how these peasants looked at the relationships to the superior landlords or zamindars on the one hand, and to the State on the other. But why did they not side with the British and with the oppressors?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ In the first place Lord Canning's Minutes were very badly written. The administrative perceptions obviously did not take into account the social situations. Social affiliation existed in various forms in the talukdars and others, which were not taken into account.

SURESH SHARMA/ With reference to protest and dissent, and the manner in which they took place in China and India, the Taiping rebellion has not been taken into account. It did not break away totally, and achieved only its limited objectives and was on the whole a failure. At any rate, the implications of this in 1857 is the involvement of soldiers, and the formation of their council specially in Delhi is of significance.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ I think Christianity (Christ) had something to do with the Taiping rebellion. It would be interesting to find out what happens when the native commissioned officers were taken into the army by the British. These officers were well organized and had an ideology; somewhat of an antithesis to the Bengali 'Babus' who were organized administratively much earlier in Calcutta and the neighbouring areas. The Oudh soldiers were not fit for this kind of leadership. They were very well organized to run a modern organization but did not have political vision.

SACHCHIDANANDA/ What is the class of peasants you are referring to? Were they share-croppers, landless labourers or other class peasants?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ This varied from area to area.

B K ROY BURMAN/ I may give reasons why peasants' uprisings during colonial period cannot be sharply focused. This is related to the phenomenon of the sanskritization process whereby increased migration took place earlier. The backward classes are landless labourers and share-croppers and their diversification took place and this may be one of the reasons. For instance, in South India in the beginning of this century the Backward Classes movements had two dimensions. One was that of peasant uprising, and the other of social mobility because of social aspirations. But the emphasis has been placed on social aspirations, or of the anti-scriptural movement (such as Jyotirba Phule's.) in Maharashtra, somehow ignoring the peasant movements. This is because it coincided with the colonial aims and the aims of the elite in India who rationalized the social movements, rather than bringing the focus on the weaker sections of society, or the marginal sections and the peasants.

RAVINDER KUMAR/ I do not entirely agree with you, if you are referring to the fact that peasant movements have always existed in India but were minimized during the colonial period. I feel that the 1857 movement was the biggest enterprise which had taken place. I think the social fragmentation and segmentation prevented large-scale uprisings which played their role in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and continue to do so also in the twentieth century. This is where the structural transformation of the economy and political ideology has had a role to play; and must be taken into account. Whether this will be successful is yet to be seen; the spectre of revolution hangs over our heads.

T K Oommen

From Mobilization to Institutionalization : The Life-Cycle of an Agrarian Labour Movement in Kerala

A CURRENT PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL PROCESS IS THAT THE DEMISE OF A MOVEMENT is inevitable. '...a movement ends either because its goals are not attained or, paradoxically, because they are. That is, if the goals of a social movement are so non-legitimate that they cannot be realised, then the forces of social opposition will ultimately bring about either the dissolution of the movement or its transformation into a less societally threatening form. On the other hand, the success of a movement means that the goals then become a part of the *status quo*, ...',¹ The specific processes which lead to the termination of the movement are: repression, discreditation, diversion, co-optation and institutionalization. The focus of this paper is on the process of institutionalization of social movements, specifically in the context of the natural history or life-cycle approach which is by now conventional in the social sciences. The argument runs roughly as follows :

The development of an organization, however rudimentary, is inevitably for the realization of movement goals. But the emergence of such an organization also sets in motion factors which defeat its original objectives. Here is a paradox: that which is needed as an instrument—organization—for the translation of movement ideology into specific programmes often itself tends to become a cause for the frustration of the very purpose for which it was introduced. Thus, the emergence of movement organizations lead to routinization of charisma², development of bureaucratic structure³, emergence of a parallel elite⁴, persistence beyond the purpose for which it emerged⁵; all of these processes are likely to lead to the institutionalization of social movements. We propose to examine this widely accepted thesis and to argue that there is no inherent tendency towards institutionalization invested in social movements. But even when they occur, they do not necessarily stop or even slow down the process of mobilization, which is so fundamental and

primary to the very survival of all movements. In fact, it can be demonstrated that mobilization and institutionalization can co-exist and, furthermore, that the process of institutionalization provides new possibilities for mobilization.

Conceptual Clarifications

It is necessary at the outset to list the essential features of the twin processes—mobilization and institutionalization—which form the focus of our study. Karl W Deutsch defines social mobilization as ‘...an overall process of change, which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life’⁶. He includes changes in a large number of specific processes such as change of residence, occupation, social setting, friends, institutions, roles, behaviour, expectations, experiences, memories, habits, etc. Admittedly, the concept of mobilization is rendered nebulous by this all-inclusive definition which becomes indistinguishable from modernization. Although Deutsch makes amends to this definition by stating that mobilization is not identical with the process of modernization, yet he still considers it as one of its major aspects. However, firstly, while mobilization of resources from certain sectors may be a prerequisite to modernization, mobilization of resources may also resist modernization. Secondly, Deutsch’s characterization of mobilization assumes the break-up of traditional structures. But, on the contrary, traditional units (at least some of them) can serve as effective foundations of mobilization if they are *transformed* rather than *dissolved*. Thirdly, in certain cases modernization might call for *demobilization* or freezing of energy of certain social units or the *relocation* of their commitment.

Given these problems it is more profitable to follow Etzioni, according to whom ‘mobilization is a process in which a social unit gains relatively rapidly in control of resources it previously did not control’⁷. The resources may be economic (e.g., funds), political (e.g., power) or psychological (e.g., commitment). The specific characteristics of mobilization which Etzioni emphasizes are: 1. A relatively rapid change in a specific period; 2. that it entails a transformation of the social unit, 3. it is deliberately initiated, guided and terminated; and 4. that it involves expenditure of resources to generate more new resources.

It is important to note that the notion of mobilization assumes hitherto unused potentials which exist in social units. By the same token, barriers to mobilization exist in all systems—counter-mobilization, imbalance in distribution of power, vested interests, social habits, ideological underpinnings, etc., to mention only a few. Since mobilization implies a collective actor, oppositional forces and allies, it also influences the politically relevant strata and effects a change in the quality of politics. Mobilized populations tend to participate in collective action—meetings, strikes, demonstrations, uprisings, riots, - and come to constitute politically articulate audiences. This new situation calls for the induction of new structures into the system to meet the new challenges,

i.e., mobilization necessitates the creation of new institutions and their institutionalization.

The process of institutionalization refers to a societally prescribed system of behaviour based on a relatively stable interaction pattern hinged on socially accepted values, norms, rules and procedures.⁸ Institutionalization implies the existence of institutional entrepreneurs who are norm-setters, value-givers, interest-articulators, organizational innovators, mobilizers of resources and goal-definers. Their capacity for institutionalization is dependent on their command over institutional positions and resources—power, wealth, symbols. However, the values which institutional entrepreneurs attempt to introduce into the system are neither consensual nor are they accepted by all. Admittedly, responses of the critical audience to institutionalization vary and fall under the following categories⁹: 1. Those who oppose institutionalization; 2. Those who exhibit autonomy in terms of their attitude towards institutionalization; 3. Those who accept and share the values but *i*. look upon themselves as the more appropriate repositories of these values and *ii*. oppose the concrete level at which the norms are institutionalized by those in power; 4. Those who interpret the same values differently. It is this heterogeneity in response to which propels change. Thus, contrary to the common theorization that institutionalization leads to bureaucratization and formalization resulting in stability, we contend that it brings with it possibilities for change. This is because the value-dissensus it creates may eventually lead to a confrontation between the contending collectivities which provide the potential for continuous change.

The Universe of Study

The empirical data for the explication of our argument was collected from one of the districts in Kerala state, Alleppey. In understanding the Indian agrarian situation, Alleppey is specially suited for an in-depth analysis of agrarian labour movements. With an area of 708 sq. miles and a population of 21 lakhs (in 1971) the density of population in the district is the highest in Kerala. Predominantly agrarian, 17.5 lakhs of its population lived in 99 villages and the remaining 3.5 lakhs lived in 8 towns in 1971. Finally, of the 5,98,468 workers at that time, 16 per cent were cultivators and 31 per cent were agricultural labourers. The district is one of the most politicized in Kerala, nay in India, with four active agricultural labour unions together having 12 per cent of the agricultural labour force as union members, and five farmers' associations enlisting 23 per cent of the cultivators as members (in 1971). This is the highest enrolment rate for Kerala.

Mobilization at the Pre-institutionalization Phase

Continuous social mobilization of collectivities often calls for crystallized social units. Not infrequently associations provide the base for such stable mobilization. By the thirties of this century there were three types of associations in

Kerala: caste associations which operated as reformist 'movements' and pressure groups, political associations promoting caste/communal interests, and class-based associations working towards the improvement of specific class/occupation categories. It is the interaction and interplay of social forces generated by these associations which led to the origin and rapid spread of the agrarian movement. While most of the caste associations were organized to bring about social reforms within the castes or to press for special benefits from the government or to fight against social oppressors, the exact nature of their programmes depended on the existential conditions of these castes. The 'pre-political' mobilization of the population, at least for the vast majority, then, took place through the instrumentality of associations anchored to primordial loyalties, and this seems to be inevitable in a hierarchically organized and politically disenfranchised system. Admittedly, such mobilization was against the domination by certain social categories.

The second set of associations was explicitly political albeit their recruitment bases were predominantly confined to specific castes or communities. The All Travancore Joint Political Congress dominated by non-Catholic Christians, Travancore State Catholic Congress monopolized by the Catholics, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee led by the Nairs were the typical examples of these associations. The alliances and alignments in the political context reflected the relative position of the numerically important communities occupied in the society, and their perception of deprivations and disabilities. Among the numerically significant social categories, the Nairs were relatively well-off as compared to the Christians, Izhavas and Muslims. Partly because the Nambudiri Brahmans entered into hypergamous marriage-unions with the Nairs the latter earned not only prestige but also wealth, and partly because they were superior tenants of vast temple estates a substantial number of the Nairs could amass riches. All these meant that the Nairs' position in the hierarchy was second only to the Brahmans. Given their economic base the Nairs took to modern education which facilitated their large-scale entry into white-collar occupations. The mobility of the Nairs enhanced the deprivation of the Christians, Muslims and Izhavas, and these formed a United Front against the Nairs in 1932. Thus, the substance of politics was mainly caste and communal interests and, it was the proximate layers in the hierarchy which moved up successively—the order being Nairs, Christians, Muslims, Izhavas, etc.

The third type of associations were class-based, at least in their overt orientations. In 1922 the Travancore Labour Association (TLA), sponsored mainly by political radicals, came into being to wrest benefit for the workers from the government and other employers. The auspices of TLA was unacceptable to the Christians and the Muslims, as they felt that this association was propagating communist ideology and atheism. In 1934 a separate Christian Labour Association was formed; the Muslims had already withdrawn from TLA and formed an exclusive Muslim Workers' Association.

By the mid-forties the occupation-based labour associations started spreading and their activities were intensified. In January 1943, the Travancore Karshaka Thozhilali (Agricultural Labour) Union (TKTU), decided to open sub-offices in every village and carry on intense propaganda through two of the communist publications—*The People's War* and *Desabhimani*. In addition, cultural media like drama and folk-songs were also used for their propaganda. One year later, a kisan sabha started functioning in the district and formal resolutions were sent to the state government requesting special representation of labour in the legislature. Around this time, a proliferation of occupation-linked trade unions such as for the labourers in coir, beedi, cashewnut, wood, etc., were also organized. Similarly, boat workers, domestic servants and toddy-tappers also formed their unions. Several of these unions were those of agro-industries, drawing their members mostly from rural areas. This had two immediate consequences for agricultural labourers. First, given the fact that these unions drew their members mainly from rural areas they had a *demonstration effect* on agricultural workers; they could observe that organized efforts often produced certain desired results. Second, it was not uncommon that the same household supplied agricultural workers and labour for agro-industries. This had an *interaction effect* on agricultural workers, i.e., the involvement of kinsmen in trade union activities prompted them to follow the same path. It was the formation of the class/occupation-linked associations and their achievements which provided the initial impetus to agrarian labour in the district for mobilizational activities. Hence, given the close association between caste and occupations, mobilization of workers in terms of occupational categories often meant mobilization of specific caste groups.

Certain general points emerge from the above description of the situation in the district. Once a deprived category in one sector is mobilized, and if it is in interaction with those in the others, the latter also tend to follow suit. In such a situation there occurs a proliferation of associations, each of which either independently or in combination pursue their interests; and, this in turn may provide the basis for a movement through a possible crystallization of oppositional forces. The proliferation of associations is at least partly indicative of the heterogeneity of the social system. Finally, while traditional structures may provide the initial base for mobilization, they are not always inimical to the process of change.

While mobilization may be viewed as a continuous process, it is important to note that its scale and intensity vary from time to time. To illustrate, within the context of a movement, mobilization at certain points in time involves a much larger population whose involvement may be total and manifold; a case in point is the Punnapra-Vayalar revolt of October-November, 1946. Although the leftist forces suffered a setback for a short time due to the revolt because a large number of the participants were killed, maimed, sentenced to death or life-imprisonment, yet it appears that the revolt was a great morale booster for the communists. By 1950, poems, novels and short stories were written

about the struggle and the martyrs, which were of great value in the political mobilization of agricultural workers. Martyrs' tombs were erected both at Punnapra and Vayalar and the two villages became 'sacred ground' for the communists. Several of the important struggles of these parties drew their inspiration from these 'struggle pockets'. For instance, the land grab agitation sponsored by CPM in 1970 started with a massive meeting and demonstration at Punnapra and the decision to encircle lands by hutment-dwellers was referred to as, 'The Punnapra Declaration'. This process of 'sanctification' of place, personalities, events, and objects is a tremendous resource for the mobilization of deprived agrarian population in the district, and in the state.

After the Punnapra-Vayalar revolt most communist leaders went underground or were arrested. Consequently, we find a period of lull in the mobilization of agrarian labour. But, the reactivation of communal-based labour organizations sponsored by the State Congress came into being to contain communist influence. However, with the arrival of Independence in 1947, communist leaders renewed their efforts to mobilize the agrarian poor through study classes, mass meetings, publication of literature, etc. The activation of the labour front by the communists was followed by similar attempts by the others. This gave birth to three agricultural labour unions in the district by 1949, sponsored by Congressmen, Socialists and Communists. Thus, political divergence prompts proliferation of trade unions for the same social category, leading to their intense mobilization.

In 1949 the communists started launching several direct action programmes fighting for higher wages for agricultural labourers, cutting standing crops from cultivators' lands, trespassing into landlords' holdings. But consequent upon the ban imposed on the party in 1948, (which continued till 1951), these activities had to be suspended suddenly. The ban was imposed following the advocacy of militant measures by the party to bring about a revolution. Notwithstanding the ban, attempts to form a Red Police and Military Force were made, and Revolutionary Committees were constituted and underground activities carried on. Communist detenus were released by early 1952, and communist activities were revived with added vigour. A major event of the year was a conference of Travancore-Cochin Agricultural Workers' Union attended by over a hundred delegates. The history of the agrarian labour movement in the district, as indeed in the state, till 1952 was a sporadic and intermittent attempt to mobilize labourers mainly by leftists, and their opposition by landed interests often operating through communal forces.

The year 1953 is marked by two important developments in the history of the agrarian movement in the district. First, movement activities were organized on a continuous basis and on many fronts. Secondly, an important confrontation between a landlord and his tied-labourer, probably the first of its kind in the area, took place. The significance of this struggle was that a tied-labourer came out openly against his own landlord, asserting his rights to be retained in employment when the latter dismissed him for a suspected

communist-sympathiser. The 'recalcitrance' of the labourer from the point of view of the landlord was a 'revolution', from the perspective of the worker and the Communist Party, which supported him. The struggle was locally known as *Mani Samaram* (struggle) named after the dismissed worker. The struggle was led by a few young persons from traditional upper caste families—Brahmans and Nairs—including the landlord's nephew, who were attracted to the communist fold.

What started apparently as an interpersonal confrontation became eventually an important mobilization of opposing interest groups. It involved virtually hundreds of persons; the landlords and his supporters on one side and a section of workers and the CPI on the other—a confrontation that lasted 54 days. A large number of party volunteers and workers were arrested and released; three cases were registered involving 106 persons; several rallies and meetings were conducted in which two to three thousand persons participated on an average; state level leaders came to be involved in the struggle influencing its course and facilitating its eventual termination. All of which created a stir in the areas, and its reverberations went far beyond the locale of the struggle.

The course which the struggle took strongly suggests that, 1. mobilization of the deprived categories can be initiated and sustained only if they are sufficiently united and strong to offer resistance and be willing to undergo persecutions of various types; 2. if the struggle is fought for the cause of the poor they should have external support, i.e., organizational, financial, and political help from some outside agency; and 3. the struggle should be led by persons drawn from dominant sections in the local community specially when the resource-base of the deprived category is feeble and their status in the local hierarchy, too low.

Prior to 1955 the agrarian movement operated almost invisibly, concentrating mainly on the 'idea market' sensitizing the agrarian poor about their exploitation and sharpening their sense of deprivation, notwithstanding a few sporadic confrontations. However, with the large-scale entry of the leftists, particularly the communists, in the State Assembly in 1952, and as their political legitimacy increased, confrontations between landed interests and the agrarian poor, supported by communists, became a matter of common occurrence. (In the State Assembly of 109 members there were 42 leftists, 29 Communists, 10 Socialists and 3 others). The year 1955 was a particularly active one with a variety of protests against evictions and launching of a satyagraha demanding immediate legislation of *Dehanna Prathipala* (Land Improvement Compensation) Bill. Apart from this, a sensational wage dispute relating to harvest led to a general strike by agricultural workers. The dispute was sensational, and significant because of two reasons. First, it took place in the field of an important Congress leader, an ex-minister, who had considerable influence in the then ruling ministry. The landlord was not particularly rich but was known for his 'feudal' attitude to labourers. Therefore, the struggle

had a political angle, the leaders of the communist-led labour union wanted to demonstrate their strength by challenging a politically significant class enemy. The struggle was to serve as a warning to other landlords. Second, it was an attempt to transform a traditional obligation met by landlords, i.e., the intermittant payment of one-fourth of the harvest wages as bonus to workers to meet their daily needs before the harvested paddy was threshed, into a right of agricultural labourers. It was for the formalization of this right, that the 1955 struggle was organized in the field of the Congress landlord. It was followed by a general strike of agricultural workers during the harvest season leading to temporary loss of wages and dislocations (37 workers were arrested and many others were harassed through beating, denying employment, etc.). Nevertheless, it led to the conversion of a traditional obligation of the landlord to a permanent right of the worker.

In 1957 the CPI was voted into power in Kerala. Indeed, it is difficult to draw an elaborate picture of mass mobilizations associated with the agrarian movement in the district during the communist regime as they were far too frequent. But the nature and types of general mobilizational activities may be briefly given here. The first widespread agitation for higher wage-rate was launched during the harvest season of 1957 in March-June, which was soon after the assumption of power by the Communist Ministry. The prevalent rate for harvesting was one-tenth of the harvested paddy and the demand was for one-eighth. In addition, the workers also demanded the customary payments. Suddenly confronted by this demand, the landowners were perplexed and responded in varying ways. There were four different response patterns: 1. Those who accepted the demand because they could not handle the harvesting either because they cultivated vast tracts of paddy fields or because they were otherwise busy—white collar employees, businessmen—and could not get their fields harvested in instalments through 'loyal workers' or by close kin; 2. those who managed to harvest the fields themselves, being cultivators of small patches of land; 3. those who organized themselves into volunteer corps and harvested each other's fields on a reciprocal basis. Most of these were small and middle peasants drawn mainly from among the Christians and Nairs; and 4. those who attempted to harvest land through 'loyal workers'—often bonded labourers who accepted the prevailing wage rate—or through 'imported' workers from areas where the wage-rate was lower—most of those who resorted to this practice were middle peasants. Thus, the response of each category was pragmatic, i.e., viewed against their respective existential conditions. However, inevitably, most of the confrontations took place between agricultural workers and small and middle peasants.

In this situation agricultural workers with CPI leanings resorted to forceful harvesting and prevention of harvest by loyal and/or imported workers. Between March and June 1957 there were innumerable forceful harvests and 79 cases of trespassing involving a large number of workers were registered by the police. This added a new dimension to the movement; the common

occurrence of a confrontation between the politicized workers who demanded higher wages and the attached and/or imported workers who were willing to accept the prevailing wages. It may be noted here that land owners too did not act in unison; there were on the one hand those who conceded the demands in order to protect their interests even as they did not approve of the demands and those 'progressive' land owners who gave higher wages, and on the other those who resisted the demand and resorted to alternate mechanisms to face the situation. Thus, while the spirit of the wage dispute was one of class confrontation, in actuality the landed and the landless—the 'haves' and 'have-nots'—were not clearly polarized into two camps. Among other things their primordial attachments based on membership in religious, caste and territorial groupings, i.e., attachments were based on traditional patron-client relations, operated as obstructing forces in facilitating class polarization. In short, an examination of the contents of agrarian disputes reveals that struggles were organized by workers for higher wages, stipulated working hours, right to employment, refusal to discharge traditional obligations. As against this, the farmers' opposition was couched in terms of assertion of their rights as to *who* should be employed, *how many* workers should be hired, *what* kind of services should be rendered by workers with or without payment.

We are now in a position to identify certain major prerequisites and consequences of mobilization of agricultural labour, which are: 1. Mobilization of agrarian poor calls for certain resources, external as well as internal; the chief among the external are economic (e.g., funds) and political (e.g., leadership), and the main internal resource is psychological, (i.e., commitment and loyalty to an ideology, party and/or organization); 2. mobilization of depressed social categories is possible only if the leaders who are entrenched in the social structure and are capable of opposing the forces of the local vested interests take initiative in mobilizing the oppressed. Further, the consequences of mobilization of a category such as agrarian poor are several: 1. A counter-mobilization by the landed interests, or those adversely affected, is almost certain; 2. in all probability a gradual relocation of commitment from primordial (village, caste, religion) collectivities to civil collectivities (parties, unions) may be in evidence in the case of those who participate in the mobilization process; 3. a change in perceiving the landed gentry, by the agrarian poor, not any more as isolated individual enemies but as an oppositional force; 4. the sensitization of agricultural labour is likely to come about to specific issues—better wages, right to employment, stipulated working conditions, etc. 5. mobilization is likely to divide both the workers and their employers (which, in turn, proves the possibility to class polarization), the former in terms of different political parties and unions and the latter in terms of a pragmatic response to protect their specific interests depending upon their existential conditions; 6. to the extent that awareness of the agrarian poor about their rights gets solidified and insofar as the landed gentry do not favourably respond to the new situation, new institutional mechanisms are required

to mediate between the interests of the contending categories, i.e., mobilization carries with it the seeds of institutionalization.

Mobilization arising out of institutionalization

The two major steps taken by the CPI Government in 1957 for the welfare of agricultural labourers were: 1. the appointment of an Industrial Relations Committee (IRC) consisting of the representatives of labourers, farmers and the government to settle disputes between agricultural employers and workers, and 2. the introduction of the notion of minimum wages for agricultural labour. These steps were essentially attempts at institutionalization of the new pattern of agrarian relations.

Under the traditional system of patron-client relationship, there were no fixed hours of work for agricultural labourers; who generally worked from 10 to 12 hours. But when the hitherto unorganized labourers began to be mobilized for intermittent struggles, the traditional agrarian relations started showing signs of disintegration leading to labour-protest against unstipulated working hours. Again, uniform wages were not paid to agricultural workers, even in adjacent talukas and villages. There were three different rates for the same work, depending upon the status of the workers: The harijans who were *adiyans* (attached labourers) were paid the lowest, the non-harijans the highest wage, and the wage-rate of harijans who were not *adiyans* came in between. The weakening of patron-client relationship also created problems relating to the criteria to be employed for hiring labourers. The issue became particularly inflammable when landlords, using discretionary power as employers, refused to hire labourers on political grounds. Occasionally, cultivators employed docile agricultural workers from other villages, and this was resented to by local labourers.

These kinds of situations provided the context for frequent disputes which necessitated the creation of an institutional mechanism to deal with the issues. The establishment of IRC by the Government of Kerala in July 1957 with a view to examining 'all the problems relating to the agricultural labour', in Alleppey district is to be viewed against this background. However, the recommendations of the IRC on wage-rate, hours of work, selection of workers, etc., were not always to the satisfaction of either the cultivators or the agricultural workers. These recommendations provided the grist for continued mobilization as a clear interpretation of these was not easy.

The rate and the mode of payment to agricultural labourers before 1957 were a private transaction between them and their respective employers. But it became formal and 'public' only after the IRC came into being in 1957, the erstwhile slave became an employee. A gap did exist between the wage-rate prescribed by the IRC and the actual wages paid to agricultural labourers, but this further provided legitimacy for the workers to fight for their rights. The issue was further complicated due to the variations in the prescribed wage-rate itself. For instance, the IRC distinguished between 'ordinary

operations' and 'other operations', and recommended different wage rates for them. However, the specific operations to be included in one or other categories were not always listed exhaustively. Since wage-rate specification by the IRC also differed from one type of land to another, and there are always intermediate types, usually both the labourer and their employers advanced the interpretation which was advantageous to them.

The IRC recommended the continuance of customary payments along with the increased wage-rate. This was invariably resented by the cultivators. Apart from this, payment of wage was recommended for certain operations for which no payment had been made till then. A specific case in point is the transportation of harvested but unthreshed paddy by a headload from the field to the homestead of the cultivator. Since the IRC recommended a payment for this operation, the labourers demanded wages which the cultivators refused to pay. Admittedly, situations of this kind prompt both groups to mobilize their strength.

Paddy fields are usually located away from the homesteads of cultivators and occasionally they may be in another village or panchayat. The farmers usually send to these fields the labourers who regularly work for them. However, the labourers who live close to these fields felt that they also had a legitimate right to work in these fields, and this view was supported by the IRC. Frequently, the employer himself did not go to the field and the labourers in the vicinity pressed their claims to be hired by either preventing the employers' men to work or by forcibly working in the fields even when the required number of labourers for the given operation were deputed by the landowner. This often led to struggles, particularly when the employers refused to pay those labourers who were not hired. Thus, while it is clear that the induction of institutional mechanisms such as IRC was the result of pressures exerted through mobilization, we also learn that the implementation of the recommendations by such a body made mobilization an on-going process.

The knowledge of the various prescriptions relating to wage-rates was not widespread, particularly among the labourers. Consequently, the labourers had to be represented by agrarian labour union leaders in the event of disputes, much to the chagrin of the employers. Frequently, the interpretations of labour and farmer representatives differed and this provided opportunities for arguments and counter-arguments, leading to demonstrations and strikes. Since the resolution of these confrontations often took place in an organizational framework (IRC), labourers and employers came to be dependent on their respective representatives. As a result, the emergence of a group of institutional intermediaries became inevitable.

The notion of minimum wages for agricultural labourers, floated in 1957 by CPI, was a worse problem both for the employer and the worker. First, day-payments were not made along a uniform pattern; sometimes in cash and at other times in kind and not infrequently in a mixed form, or again, the practice of supplying meals as part-payment was also in vogue, so that in the

absence of evolving a uniform practice the employers often took recourse to the mode of payment which was most advantageous to them. Second, the fringe benefits which accrued to the workers—particularly attached labourers—stood in the way of standardization of payment. Third, wage-rates varied from area to area depending upon local conditions and customs, and it was not infrequent that even in nearby villages wage-rates were substantially different. Fourth, the fixation of wages was tied up with stipulating working hours which was not easy to decide in the context of the prevalent agrarian work organization that operated with a low level of technology. All this meant that the fixation of minimum wages affected the traditional agrarian relations to which both the employers and the workers were hitherto accustomed.

While the idea of minimum wages was introduced by the Communist Ministry, it was not implemented. Retrospectively, the strategy appears to have been to provide a basis for agricultural labourers to demand higher wages, since it was assumed that the 'minimum wages' to be fixed cannot be less than the 'prevailing wages'. And the strategy was to demand higher wages in those areas—districts, talukas or villages—where the labourers had better bargaining power either because of ecological conditions or because of organizational power, or because they were populous. Once the demand was accepted in one area, then struggles for the implementation of the wage-rate could be extended to the adjacent areas. Thus, the bringing in of formal (legal) provisions provided a basis for continuous mobilization.

The continuous and vigorous mobilization of agricultural labourers in Kerala resulted in the introduction of the Kerala Agricultural Labourer's Act, 1972, in the State Legislature—another step in the institutionalization of agrarian relations. Apart from the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, there was no legislation relating to the stipulation of wages, working hours, etc., for agricultural workers. The present Act seeks to fill this gap, and in order to highlight how the process of institutionalization may hamper or facilitate the process of mobilization, some of the main provisions are listed, with comments, as follows:

I. *Security of employment to agricultural labourers.* Accordingly preference for employment should be given by the employers to those workers who have been working with them. This provision is an attempt to provide legal security to the worker because with the breakdown of the traditional patron-client relations and the increase in the animosity between employers and workers, the insecurity of the latter had increased considerably.

II. *Proposal to institute an Agricultural Labourer's Welfare Fund.* The employer is expected to contribute towards this fund five per cent of the wages of the workers, who has also to make an equivalent contribution. This fund is to be administered by the Agricultural Labour Welfare Fund Board to be constituted by an equal number of representatives drawn from government officials and agricultural labourers and farmers.

III. *Stipulation of working hours.* The maximum number of daily working hours for adults and non-adults are prescribed as eight and six respectively. Moreover, every worker is to be given at least half an hour recess after five hours of continuous work. However, if a worker is willing and the employer so desires, the former may be employed for more than the prescribed hours by paying double the normal wages for extra hours.

IV. *Fixation of wages.* An employer should pay the wages prescribed by the government from time to time. But if this is not done, the aggrieved worker can approach the Conciliation Officer, who is invested with the power of ordering the employer to make the prescribed payment. In case the employer refuses to comply, the officer can report the matter to the District Collector, who has to take steps to collect the amount from the employer, and reimburse the worker.

V. *Settlement of disputes.* An employer or worker can approach the Conciliation Officer for settlement of any disputes relating to work. If the officer fails to find a solution he should report the case to the District Collector, through the District Labour Officer. If the Collector so desires, the matter may be referred to the Agricultural Tribunal instituted for the purpose, consisting of an officer not less than the rank of the Collector, for further enquiry and investigation.

VI. *The maintenance of a register of agricultural labourers, by local self-government authorities for the areas under their jurisdiction.* This is required to establish employment rights of labourers in specific areas.

VII. *The provisions of the Act do not apply to those land owners cultivating one acre or less.* Admittedly, although the Act is a leap forward in the welfare of agricultural labourers viewed from a legal perspective yet it may bring about a setback to the agrarian labour movement on several counts as follows:

1. Once the elaborate machinery for settling agrarian disputes is instituted the possibility of 'bureaucratization' cannot be ruled out, and this will thwart the momentum of the movement.
2. The Act is not likely to benefit the workers of those areas where the movement is very strong, since the wage-rate there is usually much higher than the rates likely to be prescribed. In regard to the stipulation of working hours the prevalent norm (five to six hours of working) is more favourable to the workers than that prescribed by the Act. At any rate, this would give a new leverage to the employers to resist new demands by workers and the legislation may incapacitate the latter from carrying their movement further.
3. Exempting owners with one acre or less of land from the purview of the Act will adversely affect the labourers particularly because the majority of the holdings belong to this group. Conversely, the land-owners belonging to this

category will find it difficult to attract labourers, since working for them would mean less security and lower wages. This will particularly affect those farm households which do not have able-bodied men or those who combine farming with white-collar jobs, business, etc., and hence cannot find enough time to devote to farm operations.

4. The Act is likely to create innumerable occasions for 'new' conflicts between local and migrant labourers, particularly in districts where busy agricultural seasons attract labourers from far and wide, i.e., local labourers who insist on their employers' conforming to the provisions of the Act, and migrant casual labour—confrontations between these two groups of workers will invariably follow. This may divide the working class thereby adversely affecting their unified mobilization.

Our analysis of the process of institutionalization of a new pattern of agrarian relations unfolds both obvious and latent functions. Of the obvious functions the important ones are:

1. Institutionalization makes an erstwhile 'private' transaction between the agricultural worker and his employer to become an issue of 'public' concern. Thus, any violation of prescribed norms by one of the parties may lead to an interference by a third party—government officials, representatives of farmers or labourers—in order to set things right. Apparently such a situation provides greater possibility of justice being done to the aggrieved party.

2. Institutionalization of norms provides new grounds of legitimacy for the workers to fight for their rights. The process of institutionalization is a gradual one and in all probability the newly inducted norms, insofar as they favour the labour, will be resisted by their employers. But since the new norms are supported by the legislative apparatus of the state, non-conformity to them by the employer can be questioned with relative ease by an organized labour force.

3. Institutionalization curbs the high-handedness of the employer by restricting his 'freedom' to choose the workers, to leave the land fallow, etc. Similarly, it also curbs the 'freedom' of workers to indulge in irresponsible mobilizational activities ignoring the normative prescriptions. This restriction facilitates the emergence of a balanced agrarian relation functional for greater productivity.

4. Institutionalization provides for the standardization of wage-rate, i. between different adjacent localities, and ii. between different categories of workers irrespective of their status. This in turn helps further unification of the labour force.

5. Institutionalization provides security to the employer and employee

through appropriate legislative norms as against the security based on super-ordinate-subordinate relations.

Institutionalization of agrarian relations also brings into existence several latent functions, some of which are:

1. It invariably leads to the emergence of a group of professional trade unionists or institutional entrepreneurs. While their manifest role is to serve the categories they represent it is not unlikely that they develop a vested interest in maintaining their positions and for this, either the obsolete old structures are kept alive or new ones are inducted into the system—both of which may be dysfunctional for pursuing the interest of the categories of representation.

2. Institutionalization often gives birth to contrasting interpretations of the newly inducted norms, that result in endemic conflicts between the contending parties particularly because institutionalization tends to formalize social relations between them.

3. Institutionalization transforms the labour into a commodity insofar as the traditional informal relations with the employer are likely to be served. This compels him to respond to market mechanisms which result in turn engenders competition among the labour leading to intra-class conflicts.

4. The standardization of the wage-rate which institutionalization brings about invariably leads to cash payments as against the traditional payments in kind. Monetization of the wage structure in an economy characterized by high inflation, often adversely affects the labourer as his purchasing power goes down.

5. Lastly, bureaucratization of relations inevitably leads to delay, nepotism and corruption in settling disputes between the employer and the employee.

The basic argument has been that the processes of mobilization and institutionalization are to be viewed essentially as complementary rather than mutually inimical processes. However, the emphasis on different movement aspects will vary depending upon the primary aim of the movement's phase. This is indicated in the chart given below.

CHART I

Characteristics of different aspects of a movement at the two phases

Aspects of a movement 1	Mobilizational Phase 2	Institutionalization Phase 3
Ideology	Very important; emphasis on mass appeal; centres on issues of deprivation; stress on policy formulation and participation.	Not so significant; emphasis on translating movement ideology into specific programmes; stress on implementation.

1	2	3
Organization	Embryonic and rudimentary; leader-follower relationship exists but not solidified. Stress on functioning as a propaganda vehicle.	Crystallized and complex; leader-follower relationship clear and elaborate. Function as interest groups; stress on administration of justice.
Strategy & tactics	Collective actions (agitations, strikes, gheraos, satyagrahas, demonstrations, etc.); Emphasis on propaganda and communication of ideology to sensitize workers of their rights.	Interest articulation (bargaining, submission of memoranda, petition, pressing for legislations); Emphasis on 'here and now' welfare of workers.
Nature of leadership	Professional revolutionary (typical roles: Prophet, charismatic hero, demagogue).	Institutional entrepreneur (typical roles: manager, bureaucrat, bargainer, legalist).
Membership	Expansive and undefined.	Defined and formal.

Thus, it is clear from the chart that as a movement moves from the mobilization phase to the institutionalization phase its vital aspects undergo certain changes. Nevertheless, it seems safe to conclude that:

I. At the initial stages of the institutionalization of a movement mobilizational activities are likely to continue unabated. In fact, the process of institutionalization may provide new occasions for the continuance of mobilizational activities in so far as the lag between the induction of a set of norms and their actual acceptance by the critical collectivity is universal.

II. The pace of mobilization may continue and persist, if the degree of institutionalization is kept within certain limits, that is, if the mechanisms of institutionalization do not attempt to formalize social relations beyond a point. Ultimately mobilization is not *displaced* by institutionalization but the two *go hand in hand* to a large extent, and often the latter process may *accelerate* the former.

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Discussion

on Paper by T K Oommen

K SURESH SINGH/ What was the caste composition of the agricultural class, and what was its role in the movements? In Kerala, the so-called classless parties are also caste-oriented.

T K OOMMEN/ The most popular caste among the agriculturists is Pulaya. There are several other groups; and also the traditional toddy-tappers, the Izavahas. But the leadership is also changing. It was at one time in the hands of Brahmans, the Nairs and the Christians. However, in analyzing the agricultural labour movements in the district, first there were the upper caste leaders who were neither Brahmans nor Nambudiris; it was the Izavahas or the Christians who could interact with the labour classes rather than the Nairs or the Nambudiris. Nowadays, the leaders are mainly the Pulaya.

S C MISRA/ If these movements proceed along traditional channels, such as caste councils, and if in the council there are two groups of interests, how does the council resolve this problem for its functioning? It would be useful to see how caste councils organized on demographic and privileged positions, function in a particular area. Is it not possible that radical and revolutionary movements are stifled by these caste councils?

T K OOMMEN/ Using traditional institutions is only a beginning of movements in the specific context of the situation. It may not be applicable anywhere. But even if agricultural classes are mobilized, there may be half a dozen castes involved, so the situation of conflict would be the same.

S C MISRA/ But in the case of polarization mentioned by you, isn't this where zamindars are separated from the agricultural labours? If so, the question would not arise.

T K OOMMEN/ The division cannot be so neat and clear, but by and large the problem does exist, as you mention. However, specific instances will have

to be examined, to see whether this polarization will work, or whether caste council mobilizations can be used. Both the traditional and modern situations have to be looked into.

B K ROY BURMAN/ Taking examples from West Bengal, caste mobilization can work in both directions. For instance, during the United Front Ministry in certain areas when the lower classes in agriculture formed a Kisan Sabha, the upper classes formed a caste group since their position appeared to be threatened by the class movement. Therefore, they mobilized their own agricultural labourers, belonging to their own upper castes. But when the ruling party changed, and people wanted consensus, the Kisan Sabhas were abandoned; these lower castes were organized on caste-basis rather than class-basis. However, the change in these goals did not become caste-oriented because these were for economic benefits though for purposes of mobilization it was in the garb of caste-groups.

LEELA DUBE/ Is Oommen commending primordial loyalties such as the one based on caste in a predominantly agricultural region like Kerala for mobilization? If so, I disagree.

How did the people react to the summary dismissal of the semi-slaves? Leadership is being changed because of democratization from upper caste to lower class groups.

T K OOMMEN/ I was not advocating primordial loyalties; but strategies are varied in a society in which there are several structural constraints. As a beginning, these loyalties do make a lot of difference. Over a period of time this caste-platform consciousness may change into an organizational consciousness of a class authority. This, to begin with, emerges as a trade union movement and through these trade unions' activities, class consciousness crystallizes. Unanticipated consequences always exist and, of course, have to be taken into account. The modality of operations is always complicated.

When the semi-slaves were dismissed, it was because their masters suspected the CPI affiliation of the workers. The moment the dismissal took place it was considered a collective phenomenon, and another agitation took place. But other agricultural labourers continued to support the masters because they thought it might be beneficial. Thus, the upper caste has been cut across on ideological basis; and the lower classes have been cut through by other cleavages which took place during the 54 days movement.

Basically, all over India, labour is not organized. But in Kerala the organization of labour has been in existence for fifty years, specially due to CPI taking the lead in that area; which is not the case in the rest of India. Besides, there is, of course, greater urbanization and density of population in Kerala demography, which has been an important factor.

Pratibha Jain

Gandhian Style of Dissent And Protest

THE TWO BASIC GANDHIAN OBJECTIVES WERE *Swaraj* AND *Sarvodaya* TO BE pursued through non-violent means. While Gandhi was mainly occupied with the achievement of *Swaraj*, the pursuance of *Sarvodaya* was only intermittently attended to. The concern of this paper is to discuss the styles of dissent and protest, as enunciated and practised by Gandhi while he fought for *Swaraj*.

Gandhi coined the term *satyagraha* for the struggle he started in South Africa. It was a method of protest which implied both love and firmness, completely eliminating physical compulsion. He defined it as 'the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence'. Non-violence was a technique or weapon that did not mean mere tolerance or passivity; it was conceived as a force to counteract—resist—evil, untruth, and injustice. But more than this, in its totality, the non-violence of Gandhi was a whole philosophy—a way of life—governing all the facets of human existence and behaviour.

Non-violence has a long tradition both in the East and the West. In India all indigenous religions—Brahminical, Buddhist, or Jain—regard it as the 'highest morality' (*Param-dharma*), and as such the religious life of the wayfarer. However, since the ultimate truth was an individualistic quest, the concept had an individualistic temper. Gandhi converted this individualistic concept into a practical ethics of social life, saying 'where the law of *ahimsa* reigns supreme, there should be no jealousy, no unworthy ambition, no crime'.¹ As a firm believer in the unity of life, he made this one principle—*ahimsa*—the very basis of his action in all the spheres of life, religious, social, economic, or political.

Though starting with a negative prefix, *ahimsa* or non-violence is not a negative concept from the Indian point of view. Here, in language and thought, words composed with the negative give not only negative but also positive meanings. As Nakamura has remarked, "In the Indian mind 'non-idleness' (*apramada*), 'non-grudge' (*avega*), 'non-violence', etc., appeal as more positive moral virtues than 'exertion', 'tolerance' and 'peace', etc. To Europeans such a negative expression of these virtues appeals less than a positive expression

for practical concept but to most Indians these negatively expressed virtues have more power'.² No wonder Gandhi realized this, saying, 'Non-violence is a term I had to coin in order to bring out the root meaning of *ahimsa*. In spite of the negative particle 'non', it is no negative force.'³...Non-violence is an active force of the highest order...⁴. For him, thus, non-violence was invariably associated with Truth, the former serving as a means for the realization of the latter –the ultimate end of life. But since the end and the means were equally dear to him, the terms were convertible and therefore the purity of the means was equally important.⁵ Gandhi categorically rejected the theory that ends justify the means.

Non-violence as the most active force in the world was also the essence of the social good for Gandhi. He believed that a society where good-will for each other was all-pervading, injustice or discrimination toward any individual or group would be non-existent, because social forms and rules would act as vehicles to carry out this noble idea, and, give birth to a social ethics wherein the good of the individual and the good of the group would be identical. Gandhi was greatly interested in the scriptures, in which his concepts were rooted and he had been particularly influenced by the Gita and the Upanishads. For him, the Gita was a 'spiritual reference book', and he was quite convinced unlike some other interpreters of the Gita, that his creed of non-violence was in complete conformity with the spirit of Hinduism in general and the text in particular. Whereas for the actual realization of 'desireless action' the Gita points to the means of self-purification, it also lays great emphasis on the 'complete surrender' of all action and its fruit to God. The latter is a theistic means, with the truth of mysticism in it, that posits Reality as living in every being and thus conceives the basic unity of all life. 'He who sees Me (i.e., Universal Self) present in all beings and sees all beings existing in me'. That is how the Gita defines a Yogi, for whom there would be absolutely no object of ill-will and violence. Towards the last days of his life, Gandhi was drawn towards the Upanishads, particularly the Isha-Upanishad. Referring to its first stanza 'whatever lives is full of the Lord, enjoy things with a feeling of renunciation in them and do not covet anybody's property', Gandhi told Mr Sheen 'I find the sum of wisdom on this subject in the Isha-Upanishad ...' and advised him to read the Isha-Upanishad and not the Gita.

However, Gandhi's non-violence envisaged a very wide scope and had no discriminatory trait. Though he was a Hindu and was deeply rooted in his cultural heritage, he had an open mind. If on the one hand he was influenced by the Gita and the Upanishads, the Sermon on the Mount equally filled his whole being.⁶ Throughout his *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa, he was under the influence of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within you* and this influence remained throughout his life. Again the idea of *Sarvodaya* came to Gandhi from Ruskin's *Unto this Last*.⁷ For Gandhi non-violence was a spiritual virtue and he saw no opposition between Indian nationalism and universal humanism. Non-violence was not a commodity to be consumed only in

India but it has an international significance, since it aimed at the welfare of all of mankind, and worked for a world in which conflicts, wars, hatred, jealousy, discrimination, and injustice would be absent. Defining his notion of pacifism he wrote in the *Harijan*: 'A pacifism which can see the cruelties only of occasional military warfare and is blind to continuous conflicts of our social system, is worthless. Unless our pacifism finds its expression in the broad human movement which is seeking not merely the end of war but our equally non-pacifist civilization as a whole it will be of little account in the onward march of mankind....'⁸

According to Gandhi, to be non-violent did not imply indifference or insensitiveness to violence or injustice; on the contrary, he would resist it non-violently even at the cost of his life, for non-violence cannot be confused with in-action, indifference, and much less with cowardice. When an Indian was beaten to death in South Africa during the anti-Lynch law agitation, Gandhi remarked, 'It is a sad event, nevertheless, I feel happy. A *satyagrahi* must always be ready to die with a smile on his face without retaliation and without a rancour in his heart.'⁹ That is how Gandhi would rather risk the use of force a thousand times, than let his people lose their manhood.¹⁰ Again, for him there was no place for secrecy and conspiracy in the non-violent resistance movement; these are signs of ill-will and fear which are associated with violent methods. Non-violence is a moral virtue which envisages love for all, without hate or jealousy, since a truly non-violent person clearly distinguishes between evil and the evil-doer. He is advised to resist evil without any feeling of hatred for the evil-doer, for hate is the subtlest form of violence. It is because of this that on all the three occasions when Gandhi launched his non-violent mass movements he informed the head of the government about his intention and plans.

Laying down the qualifications of a *satyagrahi* Gandhi noted that he should inspire confidence in his opponent by the purity of his heart with no trace of anger or ill-will and, of course, that he will under no circumstance resort to violence. 'He should always be gentle and polite and charitable towards his opponents and never attribute motives to him or use harsh language against him'.¹¹ The Maritzburg Station incident, when he was thrown out of the compartment for being a brown man, was not regarded by Gandhi as a wrong action by an individual or a community but as the consequence of a social system in which racial discrimination prevailed, and it was this which was to be fought and removed. In the evolution of Gandhi's notion of non-violence this incident constitutes the starting point.¹² On another occasion when a bomb was thrown at Viceroy Irwin, Gandhi condemned the act most unambiguously. He pleaded not only for the safety of the British in India, but also suggested that those who professed non-violence should consider themselves as trustees for the safety of their lives.¹³

While Gandhi condemned equally all violence by anyone, in his concept of non-violence the capacity of destruction was immaterial, what was important

is the attitude. Both the 'bomb and the knife derive their lease of life from the world's belief in violence as a remedy for securing supposed justice'.¹⁴ Both organized destruction or an assassination attempted by a single man were disapproved by Gandhi, even if these attempts were made for some good cause. It is this conviction in absolute non-violence which prevented him from admiring the heroic sacrifices of Bhagat Singh, or the activities of the Indian National Army. In this context, Gandhi was no less critical of the government's attitude towards the Indian problem, since it was equally to be blamed for violent activities of the Indians. He warned, 'the Government would be foolish if they become nervous and resort to counter madness. If they are wise, they will perceive that they are in no small measure to blame for the madness of the bomb-thrower. By their indifference to popular feeling they are exasperating the nation and the exasperation is bound to lead some astray'.¹⁵

Some people maintain that non-violence was a matter of policy for Gandhi, because he had seen the failure of violence and considered non-violence as an easy method of mass mobilization. Murthi, for example, does see a moral content in Gandhian non-violence but seems to underline the failure and frustration of the terrorists and revolutionaries which, according to him, lead to the introduction of this technique of non-violence. He traces the failure of violent efforts from the Mutiny to the armed attempt of the revolutionaries during the World War I.¹⁶ However, if the Gandhian concept of non-violence is viewed in its entirety, it is difficult to agree with this line of thinking. Non-violence was a creed, and not a policy, for the failure of violent methods has seldom taken any country on the path of non-violence. Again, countries much smaller than India have adopted violent methods for their political and social reforms including their war of independence. India is such a vast country that by indulging in large-scale violent activities difficulties could have been created for the British government. In fact, the terrorists and the revolutionaries had had the government worried. Historically, there is also a tradition of violent resistance against what was considered an alien rule, such as by Shivaji and Rana Pratap who are even now idealized by the masses. It would, therefore, be wrong to conclude that it was the failure of violent revolutionary methods which led Gandhi to adopt the method of non-violence. Gandhi knew that his method might prove a long way to realizing the goal, but that did not dissuade him from following the creed of non-violence. After adopting non-violent methods for ten years, he writes, 'I am impatient to reach the goal, if we can, through non-violence and truth. I have infinite patience to wait, if we cannot reach the goal without the sacrifice of non-violence and truth'.¹⁷

More than liberating the country through a non-violent movement, Gandhi's dream was to see an independent India based on the theory of non-violence; and he made this quite explicit at the outset, that 'the Congress was not only aiming at replacement of the alien Government, but an alien method of government, it was to rule not through the police backed by the military, but

through its moral authority based upon the greatest good will of the people'.¹⁸ For him, the eradication of untouchability, the abolition of child marriage, the transformation of zamindars into trustees and such other changes could take place through a change of heart. Awakening of the consciousness would take place through self-suffering of those who genuinely believed in non-violence.

Gandhi's first experiment in non-violent resistance was made in South Africa. It started with the Maritzburg incident, when he resented colour prejudice and practised non-violence at the individual level. Subsequently, he launched a large-scale non-violent struggle for the rights of the Asiatic settlers in South Africa. But at the same time during the course of the Boer war he supported the government and organized a corps of stretcher-bearers. This support to the government is a reflection of Gandhi's conviction that one should not bear any ill-will towards its opponent, if his action is justifiable. However, even from the absolute point of view any kind of participation in violent action would be against the spirit of non-violence. For example, this indirect participation in war would be an indirect participation in an act of violence. But, perhaps, by this time Gandhi's concept of non-violence was yet in the process of evolution and had not acquired its mature form. Nevertheless, it became quite clear that non-violence could be used to a certain extent with success as a means of group protest.

In January 1915 when Gandhi returned to India he looked at the Indian situation 'with the eye of a *satyagrahi*'.¹⁹ His struggle against unjust laws began at Viramgam in Gujarat, and it was further pursued at Champaran in Bihar in favour of the cultivators who were forced by the planters to cultivate indigo and were unjustly exploited by them. It is well-known that for violating the rules he was produced in court where he pleaded guilty and asked for severe punishment. He tackled the problem of textile workers at Ahmedabad through the same non-violent resistance. In the same year he took up the cause of peasants at Kheda district.

It would be relevant here to understand and examine Gandhi's attitude towards the World War I. Gandhi rendered unconditional assistance to the British government by raising funds and ambulance units and also by encouraging recruitment. The reasons for this attitude may be sought in Gandhi's belief that in an hour of crisis the opponent should not be left in a state of helplessness. This is why through his actions he wanted to show that though he considered the British government an opponent, he would not like to embrace it at a critical juncture. He further felt that if citizens of the empire had certain rights over it, they also owned certain duties towards it. It is worth noting here that in those days Gandhi considered the British empire as a 'benign institution'.²⁰

Whatever reasons may be adduced for Gandhi's attitude towards the World War I, the fact remains that it amounted to a violation of the concept of non-violence as in no circumstances he would like a non-violent person to participate in violence.²¹ In this connection J B Kripalani's explanation appears

satisfactory, for he says that the events upto 1920 constituted for Gandhi a stage of evolution of his theory of non-violence, that gradually evolved further through various experiences.²² Gandhi has himself tried to justify his action and tried to be consistent, but this has not been adequate or convincing. He is perhaps more truthful when he called it, 'unconscious weakness'.²³

Apart from the abovementioned violation of the spirit of non-violence in his participation in World War I, one also notices an inconsistency in Gandhi's attitude towards the other world war. At the time of World War II when the British Empire was again facing a crisis Gandhi did not adopt the same attitude. He felt...my own life-line is cast. I can no longer in any conceivable circumstances take part in Britians' wars'.²⁴ By this time Gandhi's faith in non-violence is definitely more crystallized than it was earlier. It is equally important to note that in the two decades, 'Gandhi's faith in the British Empire had been irrevocably shaken'.²⁵

In the above context, it is important to note that the three mass movements of 1920, 1930 and 1942—convincingly proved that non-violence was not only an individualistic idea but that it could be used as a method for large-scale protest movement. In the Non-cooperation Movement launched on the 1st of August, 1920, Gandhi had declared that besides strengthening the *Khilafat* agitation his aim was to bring *Swaraj* within a year. In this movement people were asked to withdraw their children from government schools, return the titles and honours which the government had bestowed upon them, and lawyers were asked to stop going to the courts, etc. Besides this, the *Swadeshi* movement was intensified by organizing bonfires of foreign cloth and also picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops. A new atmosphere was now created by arranging mass meetings and observing hartals. Though the movement was withdrawn due to the Chauri-Chaura incident, Gandhi had by this time emerged as the undisputed leader of the masses. At any rate, large-scale non-violent mass movements were a new phenomenon in the history of Freedom Struggle and its most remarkable contribution lies in the awakening of the masses throughout the country.

The Civil Disobedience movement was aimed at achieving complete independence. The most important aspect of the movement was the breaking of unjust laws. Gandhi gave a lead by breaking the so-called salt law, which both his friends and the government, thought in the beginning would serve no purpose. But this, to everyone's surprise, gave a completely new dimension to the movement and with every step on his way to Dandi, Gandhi rose in stature. By the time this historic march ended, Gandhi's influence had widely spread in urban as well as rural areas. The Dandi March became a symbol for the people, and the salt depot picketing was attempted by several batches of *satyagrahis*. Gandhi was imprisoned but the *satyagrahis* went ahead to the famous Dharasan depot picketing where they peacefully faced the blows of mounted lathis. Subsequently, the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931) and the withdrawal of the movement without achieving its aims caused a great deal

of disappointment among the people. Neither the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was respected by the government nor did the Round Table Conference solve the Indian problem. Gandhi was, therefore, forced to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. He was immediately arrested on 4th January, 1932, and released in May 1934. When he came out of prison he realized that violence was growing. Seeing the changed atmosphere he was so depressed that he withdrew the movement. In any case, it is important to note that the desire to resist the government had percolated down from the urban society to the rural masses, and it also included a large number of women participants. Another aspect of this struggle was that by and large the *satyagrahis* preserved the spirit of non-violence in their conduct. It was indeed the impact of the Gandhian protest movement which shocked the government and even surprised the people. Gandhi was now shining on the Indian political horizon like a charismatic personality with a magical appeal.

The third large-scale mass movement suggests some significant changes in Gandhi's attitude towards the government. The very title of the movement 'Quit India' and its slogan 'Do or Die' shows that Gandhi had lost patience with the British government. He sounds desperate and seems to have lost all faith in the method of negotiations. In all previous campaigns the door for negotiations even in the midst of the struggle had always remained open. In fact, Gandhi had listed readiness for negotiation as an essential qualification of a *satyagrahi*. But this kind of infinite patience which he demanded from a non-violent volunteer was missing at this juncture. Nevertheless, it may positively be stated that even now he was not prepared to resort to violence.

Non-cooperation, the breaking of laws, long fasts are some aspects of the non-violent mass struggle which suggest that the application of moral pressure was an intrinsic part of the Gandhian movement. But beyond an attempt at a change of heart, of preparedness for self-suffering, its objective was to paralyze the government. However, it may be discussed whether pressure tactics are in harmony with the spirit of non-violence which demands absolute harmony and goodwill, denouncing any imposition of compulsion on the opponent. Perhaps, there inevitably is a gap between the idealist and the practical aspects of non-violence, and we have already referred to some inconsistencies in Gandhi's attitude during the two World Wars. Similarly, on the question of council entry Gandhi's attitude shows inconsistency. In 1920 he felt that entry into the council was out of question, while in 1934 he said that entry was an inevitable necessity.²⁶ But whatever these issues may be, the fact is that Gandhi did give a new dimension to the age-old concept of non-violence, making it a successful moral force that compelled foreign rulers to quit and grant independence to India. On the one hand, it exercised a magical impact on the Indian masses, and on the other hand gave an ethical character to the Indian freedom struggle. It would be pertinent here to make a distinction between Gandhi and the Congress. To Gandhi non-violence was a creed while it was a matter of policy for the Congress.²⁷ Not only Congress

as an organization but even many of Gandhi's friends lacked that firm faith in non-violence which he possessed. It may be debatable as to what extent Gandhi contributed towards the attainment of freedom, but he proved undisputably that non-violence could be used as a means of group resistance.

Finally, one may be sceptical about the success of the non-violent method of resistance in the present times yet it is generally admitted that the exercise of moral force, which advocates the qualities of self-sacrifice, fearlessness and courage is a commendable method. And, if we concede that war is inevitable, (whatever be the concept of war, sin, instinct, universal law of conflict and immanent dialectics, etc.) the relevance of the principle of non-violence remains equally eternal.²⁸ Non-violence as a method of protest may not eradicate violence completely. Even so Gandhi's objective was to achieve a system in which violence took the lowest place, or in other words, a system in which violence would be reduced to its minimum.

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10. *Ibid*, Vol. I, pp. 256-57.
11. D. S. Sharma, *The Renaissance of Hinduism*, Banaras, Banaras Hindu University, 1944, p. 581.
12. "My active non-violence began from that date". *Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 82. Also describing the incident D. G. Tendulkar has concluded, "This experience changed the course of his life." *Mahatma*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, 1960, p. 37.
13. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXXII, *op. cit.*, p. 342.
14. *Ibid*, Vol. XXXX, p. 260.
15. *Young India*, 18.4.1929, Vol. XI, No. 16, Ahmedabad.
16. V. V. Raman Murthi : *Non-violence in Politics*, Delhi, Frank Brosli Co., 1958, pp. 97-98.
17. *Young India*, 16.11.1930, Vol. XII, No. 3, Ahmedabad.
18. *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 541.
19. V. V. Raman Murthi : *op. cit.*, Delhi, 1958, p. 15.
20. B. R. Nanda : *Mahatma Gandhi*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958, p. 425.
21. Later he himself reflected : "There is no defence for my conduct only in the scales of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) I drew no distinction between those who wield weapons of destruction, and those who do Red Cross Work. Both participate in war and advance its cause. Both are guilty of the crime of war. But even after introspection during

- all these years, I feel that in the circumstances in which I found myself, I was bound to adopt the course I did". *Young India*, 13.9.1928.
22. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi : His Life and Thought*, Delhi, Publications Division, 1970, p. 328.
 23. While replying to B de Light Gandhi wrote, "I would therefore urge Mr. B de Light and other fellow barristers not to mind my fault or incomplete argument and still loss to mind my participation in war which they may be unable to reconcile with my professions about war. Let them understand me to be uncompromisingly against all war. If they cannot appreciate my argument, let them impute my participation to unconscious weakness. For I would feel extremely sorry to discover that my action was used by any one to justify war under certain circumstances." *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXXX, p. 363.
 24. *The Collected Works*, Vol. XXXX, p. 365.
 25. B. R. Nanda : *op. cit.*, p. 425.
 26. Apart from these limitations and inconsistencies in the non-violent movement of Gandhi it is ironical to note what he said in retrospect about the entire non-violent struggle. But we have to keep in mind the fact that Gandhi uttered these words when the partition and riots had disheartened him and he was a broken man. He wrote that the country had offered passive resistance to the British and not non-violent struggle and the passive resistance is the tool of the weak. *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Part II, *op. cit.*, pp. 281, 276 and 289.
 27. For details regarding the differences between Gandhi and the Congress see V. V. Raman Murthi, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-279.
 28. Unnithan and Yogendra Singh, *Traditions of Non-violence*, *op. cit.*, 1973, pp. 3-4.

Discussion

on Paper by Pratibha Jain

C BADRINATH/ The very 'violent' attitude—approach—of Gandhi must be borne in mind, despite the fact that his philosophy was 'non-violent'. By this I mean the coercion—force—which he perpetrated 'non-violently' not only on his son Hiralal but on Kasturba. Also his act of forcing Subhas Bose to leave the Congress, and his further perpetration of violence—those experiments—on his nieces who became psychological cases. It seems that his non-violence appears as a case of desperately overcoming his own inner violence.

S C MISRA/ We must distinguish between felt dissent and public dissent as I have said earlier. Is it possible to distinguish the two—public and private ethics—so easily, specially in the case of Gandhi as Badrinath has suggested?

C BADRINATH/ I did not say that Gandhi was not a total man: he was an integrated person, perhaps the only one which modern India has produced. But there are features—characteristics—that can not be explained away.

K J SHAH/ One of the fundamental difficulties in understanding a person like Gandhi is that he is very different from others. He lived by very different principles and propositions, with an ability which was enormously creative. If creative scientists can be misunderstood, a creative moralist can be misunderstood even more, specially one who was dealing with the totality of reality. This context of totality should be borne in mind when talking of his experimenting with human beings, in such examples as given of his son and wife. But Gandhi changed many of his ideas in relationship to Kasturba. However, since personal liberty was not essential to Gandhi's philosophy as it is for some of us, we have to view his ideas in this light.

But these incidents—Gandhi's experiments with Truth—are very minor compared to what people do in the name of science, experimenting with scientific and biological weapons on thousands of people and nobody protests. If Gandhi experimented with himself, often to see what a human being can be

or for his potentialities, then, if anybody had a greater right to do so he had this more than any of the others. Does all this amount to the fact that he was a violent man? Even his dealing with Subhas Bose, which Badrinath mentions is an incorrect assessment. Whatever decisions were taken by him, mistakenly or not, he had as much right to chose a way out since he was at least as sincere and honest as anyone else; and, he did sincerely try to change Subhas Bose's views. His basic point was that India and Indians must seek salvation in their own context. Hence arose the difficulty between him and Subhas Bose.

In Gandhi's treatment of Subhas the question of violence does not arise. If anyone had the right to be concerned with the destiny of the nation, it was certainly Gandhi. The issue was not simply of Subhas Bose becoming or not becoming the president of the Indian National Congress. Subhas Bose was committed, rightly or wrongly, to a certain course of action. He believed that it was expedient to invite Japanese or German help to throw out the British. Gandhi felt the such a course would be disastrous for the nation. By such a course of action, Gandhi felt, the destiny of the nation would be in peril. Did anyone expect him at this stage to be soft and pliant?

Gandhi refused to meet Hiralal because he felt that further meetings would be of no help, they would only embitter his relationship. He tried to persuade him to a different way of life and thought, but failed. Gandhi had a certain vision of life and human destiny. All his life he experimented with it. He would not do it with you or me, but only with people for whom he felt personally responsible and concerned. It is strange that an age which concedes to the scientist the unlimited right to experiment with nuclear fission and weapons of biological warfare should condemn Gandhi. After all what these scientists do, affects not only the humanity of the contemporary world but generations yet unborn.

Therefore, to discuss the life of Gandhi by picking on little fragments is naive and foolish, i.e., to deduce from a single statement made by him at a particular time as the final judgement of his failures and accomplishments is not quite scientific and objective.

K SURESH SINGH/ Gandhi's attitude and ideas towards violence for bringing change were altered quite a bit in the third phase of the movement. For instance, even if the Chauri-Chaura incident took place again, he would not have called off the 'Quit India' movement. Again, a statement made on the abolition of the zamindari system was significant, for he said he would rather have a bloodbath than not abolish zamindari. This was the radical change towards which he was heading, at the end of his life. As regards Subhas Bose, Gandhi tried to elect him to the presidentship of the Congress, and also tried to persuade him to come to his side.

PRATIBHA JAIN/ It is probably true that Gandhi did burden himself too much on Kasturba, and imposed himself on her. But I have not dealt with these

instances, which one can go on about indefinitely. I am discussing his methods and non-violence, only because this has been part of his general approach. The question whether non-violence was sacred for him or not, is different. But as a policy for Congress, it was certainly advocated. He did not make a difference between the two, i.e., the Congress and a general policy; there was no basic change on the question of using violence in later life as suggested by Suresh Singh. He wanted to withdraw whenever any 'Chauri-Chaura' took over all over India. When he accepted in 1942 violence of the Quit India movement it was not as a compromise but because he could not do anything about it. At any rate, he was, probably, disheartened and discouraged at the response of the establishment or the rulers to his attitude. It disappointed him and made him impatient and a broken man in 1948. Basically, Gandhi's pressure was of a moral kind and a non-violent one, not a violent one. His *satyagraha* had moral content, unlike what is happening today.

SUDHIR CHANDRA/ The shift of Gandhi's conviction from non-violence to violence from 1942 to 1945 is very significant, and needs to be considered in the light of the letters and correspondence which are available for this period. The events of the War and of Kashmir influenced his attitude a great deal, in the manner in which India was to gain freedom from the British. There is possible evidence that Gandhi was toying with the idea of supporting the War effort if in return the British behaved in a particular manner. A very moving and poignant letter by Aruna Asaf Ali on the treatment meted out by Gandhi and the CWC to the activists of the August rebellion would seem to question the assertion of Kumar Suresh Singh regarding Gandhiji's attitude to the 1942 movement.

K. SURESH SINGH/ Gandhi's attitude had certainly changed more when he reacted to the socialist leaders who were in jail, and the Naval Mutiny, than when he reacted to the trial of Sardar Bhagat Singh. There was more sympathy with them now, than was the case earlier.

PRATIBHA JAIN/ As regards Sudhir's point I do not see, from the writings which I have examined, that Gandhi was willing to compromise either with the British or with any foreign powers about the Indian question. He was not willing to compromise with any kind of violence; he was very sure about that.

K Suresh Singh

From Ethnicity to Regionalism : A Study in Tribal Politics and Movements in Chotanagpur from 1900 to 1975

THIS PAPER PRESENTS A SET OF TENTATIVE HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE development and transformation of tribal politics in Chotanagpur.¹

There are two reasons for our choosing the period 1920 to 1975 for an in-depth study of tribal politics. One, a distinct change was noticeable in the behaviour-pattern of tribal movements; and two, this period saw the rise, in terms of ethnicity of a separatist movement, and its transformation into a regional movement.

Tribal politics in the pre-1920 phase could be described in terms of a series of revolts, sporadic, isolated, and spontaneous. They were led by the tribes which were settling down as agrarian communities. The revolts centred around rights in land and forest. The revolts were inspired by the primeval dream of freedom, and they aimed at the total restructuring of the primitive system, which was breaking down under the impact of the colonial economy. They were violent, and they were ruthlessly crushed. Certain tribes such as the Bhil and the Mina, who had been uprooted and had lived in conditions of turmoil, took recourse to banditry which change could be seen as a form of social protest; their leaders, described officially as pests were, in fact, peasant rebels. The phase which began after 1920 was generally free from such episodes. There began movements which were sustained by an organization and through a continuous flow of external stimuli. The latter were provided by the freedom movement which came to the tribal world in the 1920s, and through the personality of Mahatma Gandhi.

Not all tribes responded to the freedom movement and the Mahatma; only sections of the Santals, the Oraon, the Bhil and Gonds—all major tribes—did. These sections had already been sensitized to Vaishnavism. Their leaders were Bhagats steeped in the bhakti tradition, like Hindu peasantry elsewhere, and they understood the idioms in which Gandhiji's message was couched

The *Bhil Bhagats*, the *Tana Bhagats*, and the *Saphahors* among the Santhal, the Haribaba movement among the Hos (1930) and the Rajmohini movement among the Gonds saw in the freedom movement led by Gandhiji an opportunity for the recovery of the tribal raj and rights as agrarian communities which they had lost, for continuing social reforms such as temperance, purification and education, and for seeking social uplift and establishing an equation with peasant castes. Most of these Bhagat sects in their origin antedated the freedom movement. They received a fresh lease of life through Gandhiji's reconstruction programme. Many Bhagats became faithful followers of the Indian National Congress, and they clung tenaciously to its programme in the most adverse circumstances. They became the standard-bearers of the freedom movement among tribes in backward regions. Interestingly, most of the leaders of the movement among the Ho and the Bhil called themselves the *chelas* of Gandhiji. The significance of the Bhagat movements becoming 'nationalized' was considerable, even though the Bhagats were only a minority among their people.

While some sections of the tribes accepted the nationalist programme and joined the mainstream of the national movements, they were also not unmindful of the particular demands of their situation. The *Swaraj* meant not only freedom from British raj, but also freedom from the oppression of the *dikus*, money-lenders, zamindars, and feudal overlords. The 'ram rajya' was interpreted to mean the restoration of the tribal world of primitive freedom, of the golden age of the race, the memory of which had survived. Freedom to them meant the restoration of agrarian and forest rights.

What was then the dynamics of the separatist movement in Chotanagpur (1920-67)? Why did the separatist movement begin in Chotanagpur alone—and here by Chotanagpur we mean the historical region which cut across the present-day administrative and political divisions—and not in other regions of tribal middle India? The autonomy movement among the Bhil in Gujarat is a much later development and, in a way 'artificial'. Elsewhere, outside Chotanagpur, tribal politics, as revealed by the election results from 1952 to 1971, has been assimilated into the all-India (the Congress, Socialist, Jan Sangh, Communist and Swatantra) or regional (the Gantantra in Orissa) political system, parties and programme.

There was a combination of reasons which explained why Chotanagpur became the centre of the separatist movement. First, Chotanagpur was the most advanced of the tribal regions in point of literacy, political consciousness, and industrial progress. Secondly, the major tribal communities were concentrated in a geographically distinct region; they were not split up like the Bhil and the Gond into different political and territorial systems. Thirdly, Christianity came in a big way to Chotanagpur; the major tribes of Chotanagpur were very effectively influenced by the missions. In fact, there was no other region of tribal middle India which witnessed such a spread of Christianity. As Christianity spread it performed many roles: it gave them a history and a myth;

it accentuated the notion of private rights in land; it promoted education and medical care; it also emphasized a sense of separateness from the rest. Fourthly, the Chotanagpur tribes had a tradition of militant and organized struggles going back over a hundred years. The struggles were organized around land and not forests, as elsewhere. The incidence of proletarianization was small when compared with that among the Bhil. The tribal system had survived relatively intact in this region. Fifthly, there was a rich corpus of anthropological literature to draw upon in order to create a new sense of history, which could legitimate the tribals' search for identity. Sarat Chandra Roy, the father of Indian anthropology, was not a closet anthropologist, but also the first ideologist and active protagonist of the demand for tribal autonomy. He gave an eloquent expression to the tribal's demand for separation; his ideas and draftsmanship left their imprint on the memoranda submitted by tribal organizations before different government bodies. Lastly, Chotanagpur was exposed to the operation of many interests. The Bengalis formed a sizeable progressional and landowning community, and the Muslims were a significant trading and professional interest. The Bengali-Behari controversy over employment in the late 1930s and the Muslim League politics also affected the development of the tribal separatist movement.

We shall briefly describe the six phases through which the separatist movement was transformed into a regional movement.

The first phase starting at the turn of the present century, saw the rise of the institutions designed to introduce reforms and stimulate, development among the tribes mainly along denominational and even inter-denominational lines. The leadership came from the missionaries and students.

The missionaries pioneered temperance movements to check the evil of drinking habits among tribals and formed cooperative societies to free them from the clutches of money-lenders. Of the latter society, the most notable was the Roman Catholic Cooperative Society, founded in 1906, which had a considerable effect in 'civilizing' the aboriginal and raising his standard of life generally. Societies were also formed for the promotion of education. Led by the Christian teachers and students they constituted the matrix of the political movement which was to be spearheaded by educated Christians later. As early as 1898, the Christian Association had been formed by the Lutheran graduates for the promotion of education. In 1918, the Catholics joined it to form the Christian College Union. In 1912, J. Bartholmen of the Anglican Mission, on his return from the Students' Conference at Dacca in 1911-12, founded a branch of the Dacca Students Union with the objective of raising funds for the education of poor Christian students. The Munda-Oraon Education Conference (Siksha Sabha) founded by a non-Christian leader and the Ranchi Union did the job of promoting education among urban tribals.

There were institutional manifestations of not only inter-denominational but also occasionally of pan-tribal solidarity for the socio-economic uplift of the region, as a whole. In 1912, the Chotanagpur Charitable Association

was organized by all aboriginals, Christians and non-Christians, to raise funds to provide scholarships for students. Voices were raised for forging unity of the people of Chotanagpur and for abolition of differences among Christians and non-Christian tribals, as also among all tribals, Munda, Oraon, Tamaria, Mahali, Lohar and Panre. A new sentiment was in the air 'All Adibasis were one', 'Adibasis of lower category such as Lohar, Panre, Bhuniya and Tamaria should not be looked down upon', etc. The Pan-tribal sentiment was, however, weak.

When the era of constitutional reforms dawned after 1918 and demands for promotion and protection of regional and sectarian interests grew, the educated Christian tribals, mostly students, belonging to the German and Anglican Missions, took a hand in organizing the Chotanagpur Improvement Society at the instance of the Anglican Bishop of Ranchi. A Munda led this inter-denominational (Anglican-Lutheran) body, which voiced its concern in 1916 over the 'absence of security for tribals and stressed the need for the preservation of tribal identity in the changing political context'. 'Whatever may be done in the way of reform elsewhere', it urged, 'the aborigines of Chotanagpur may be left to the administration of European officers'. The Society also offered various suggestions for economic advancement of the tribal community, but it became moribund by 1920.

The second phase from 1920-38 was dominated by the activities of the Chotanagpur Improvement (Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj) Society (1920). A tribal urban middle class was gradually forming. The society embodied inter-denominational unity of the missions for political purposes, and unlike the first phase set up a sustained operation. It was led by tribal teachers and catechists and sought to secure employment for educated tribals, reservation in the services and legislative bodies, and formation of a sub-state joined to Bengal, or Orissa. Though it sought to spread its activities to villages, it remained essentially an urban movement. This period also witnessed the development of mini-revivalism among tribes, very much on the lines of the Indian renaissance, which stressed return to the Golden Age of the community and formulated an individualistic approach to reform and service of the community. It is to this phase that we can trace the revival of *Parhas* and the discovery of lost 'scripts' said to have been used by the tribes in their heyday. The Society was able to focus the attention of the authorities on the problems of the tribes. The Simon Commission and the Government responded to the tribal problems, and sought their solution within the framework of the then existing political structure.

The third phase from 1938-47 saw the rise of a militant movement under the Adibasi Mahasabha. The immediate cause of the formation of the Mahasabha was the experience of the first elections held in 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress had swept the polls. This persuaded mainly Christian as also some non-Christian tribals to close their ranks, and form a joint body. The Chotanagpur Improvement Society led by different

denominations and non-tribals merged with the Adibasi Mahasabha. In this respect the latter represented an advance on the earlier movement commanded a wider political base, and claimed pan-tribal composition and objective. Two other sources of influence on the Mahasabha, as mentioned above, were the Bengali-Behari controversy and the Muslim League politics. The Bengalis felt that their interests in Bihar were not safe and, therefore, they could combine with the tribals to form a separate state. The Muslim League during the mid-1940s played with the idea of forming a corridor passing through the tribal areas to link East and West Pakistan. They sympathized with the tribals and gave financial support to the Adibasi Mahasabha. Both the Samaj and the Mahasabha were 'loyalist', the latter remained outside the mainstream of nationalist politics and the freedom movement. Its President, Jaipal Singh, gave support to the British war effort to which the Congress was opposed and played a personal role in recruiting tribals for the British army. The Mahasabha was led by professional political workers, some of them highly educated and articulate. It became a Chotanagpur movement extending over both urban and rural areas. It involved tribals other than the Ranchi tribals. It demanded not the formation of a sub-state but complete separation from Bihar. A series of violent incidents occurred during this period which underlined the militant nature of the movement. But by 1947 the militancy had failed to pay off. The Sabha was routed by the Congress in the elections held in 1946. The link with the Muslim League was broken, and the Bengali-Bihari controversy died down.

post-independence

The fourth phase from 1949-58 saw the rise of the Jharkhand party. The Adibasi Mahasabha was wound up (except in its cultural aspects), and a new regional party created. Behind it were the experiences of the failure of the militant movement and of the framing of the constitution for India. The tribals had been recognized as a minority, and the fifth and the sixth schedule had given them more than the anthropologists and the British administrators had prepared them for. The 'exclusion' had been ended. The framers of the constitution were giving the country a secular system, which assured the missionaries and the minorities. Further, it was discovered that the Census of 1941 had given an exaggerated figure of tribal population in Chotanagpur, which sustained the Adibasi Mahasabha movement. The Census of 1951, like the Census of 1931 showed that the tribals were not a very large community. In fact they had never been a majority in the Chotanagpur region. Therefore, the Jharkhand party was thrown open, at least, in principle, as embodied in its constitution to all Chotanagpuris. There was thus a transition from ethnicity to regionalism as a formative factor in the movement. This was, partly, in keeping with the larger political and secular stance current in those days that language or region and not ethnicity should determine the formation of a province. Some elements of the Congress Socialist party and quite a few members of the non-Bihari money-lending community who could be identified as the *dikus* (the aliens) joined the party. The concept of the

Jharkhand was enlarged to include all the regions that once formed part of the Chotanagpur administrative division. Thus the tract inhabited by the Chotanagpur tribals which formed part of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were included in the Jharkhand. The method adopted by the party was constitutional. Though Christians dominated the movement and provided the leadership there was an unmistakable tribal core to it. This will be evident from the fact, as described later, that the party polled nearly 7,50,000 votes in the 1952 and 1957 elections (Chart I).

The period from 1952-57 which cut across the two elections was, in many ways, the peak period for the Jharkhand movement. The Jharkhand had emerged as the major party in the Chotanagpur-Santhal Parganas region. The second general elections had seen it extend its influence in Orissa, where it captured five seats, and held the balance of power in the state politics plagued by instability. It displayed remarkable unity, laid down the law in tribal region, could mobilize thousands of people and take out mammoth processions at short notice.

The fifth phase, from the late 1950s, saw the decline of the party, which could be attributed to many factors. Firstly, there was the growing impact of development programme on Chotanagpur and the increasing involvement of the tribals in developmental processes. Secondly, the split between the advanced Christian and relatively backward non-Christian tribals arising out of the competition for better educational facilities, employment opportunities, and control over development inputs and resources, deepened. The non-tribals started looking to the Congress and the Jan Sangh for support by the late 1950s. Many all-India parties appeared on the scene and strengthened their presence (Congress, Jan Sangh, Swatantra, CPI). Thirdly, the experience of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, which had given representation to tribal interests in the government and the council of ministers, had made it clear that all the tribals needed was a share in power to protect their interests, which could as well be secured by joining the Congress or by coming to some kind of understanding with it, as in Orissa.

Fourthly, the Jharkhand Party, as mentioned elsewhere in this paper, did not have any agrarian programme. Its leaders were town-based professionals, who had little feel for rural problems. Its ally was the Janta Party which represented the zamindars of the Chotanagpur. In 1962 it admitted as its member the foremost zamindar of Chotanagpur, and it appointed a secretary from the money-lending community. The situation after 1963 had become radical and it demanded a radical programme for the tribal masses which the Jharkhand Party could not afford. Part of the Congress success later could be explained by its 'garibi hatao' programme.

Lastly there was dissidence within the party arising out of the style and performance of leadership, particularly at the time of the reorganization of states, when the Jharkhand had not only failed to press its demand at a higher level, but also seen a sizeable chunk of the 'Jharkhand' being given away to West

Bengal. The party had always been handicapped by want of funds which alone could sustain an organization which never efficiently functioned at the higher level. The search for money led to strange alignments with elements such as the *dikus*, the traditional enemies of the Adivasis. The non-Bihari *dikus* had a vested interest in the movement to keep the Bihar *dikus* away. Party support was also given to many 'outsiders'. All this had created strains within the party. This became evident when the party was wiped out in the mid-term elections in Orissa. But a greater show was in store.

The elections in 1962 slashed the number of votes polled by the Jharkhand to almost half of that registered in 1957 and reduced its seats to twenty in the Bihar Assembly. This was a sharp reminder to its leaders that its stance of isolation, either ethnic or regional, could no longer be maintained. The merger of the Jharkhand party with the Congress, effected in June 1963, was thus a natural corollary of the operation of the above-mentioned forces.

We enter upon the sixth phase (1963-75) after the fourth general elections, when though the objective conditions of a movement were present and there were spurts and there was even a sustained rhythm of movements, there was no unified political system. The structure of the Jharkhand party had been fragmented: the parent body had broken up into smaller parties formed by tribal sub-ethnic groups. The Jharkhand was like a splintered glass. There was a movement, but no composite party.

This phase has many interesting features. There is a distinct radicalization of politics. This came about as a result of the articulation of the agrarian factor in the tribal situation. The Jharkhand in its constitutional role as a regional party, had played down the agrarian issue. During the intervening years the agrarian situation had become worse. Incidence of alienation of land belonging to tribals had shown an upward trend; more and more educated tribal youths were seeking employment; construction of industrial complexes had resulted in the displacement of tribals from their land, and their absorption into industrial culture was slow. Though there was some development in tribal regions, it was on a smaller scale than elsewhere, and it was outstripped by rising aspirations among the new generation of the tribal community. The participation of a section of tribal leadership in the government, no doubt, resulted in distinct improvement in some matters: more tribals were employed in the government than before, the quotas reserved for them were, by and large, filled, more attention was paid to their region, and there was also a larger flow of funds. But evidently, this was not enough. The Census of 1971 disclosed an alarming state of affairs. The percentage of the scheduled tribes in the population of the districts of tribal Bihar had sharply fallen during the 1961-71 decade: in Ranchi from 61.61 to 58.08, in Singhbhum from 47.31 to 46.12, and in the Santhal Parganas from 38.24 to 36.22. This was not only because of the slow growth rate of the tribal population, which was, in fact, among the lowest but also because the heavy influx of people from other parts of Bihar.

Secondly, this redicalization was also due to the influence of the Naxalite movement, infiltration of extremist elements in tribal organizations and the entry of the leftist parties in the region, in a big way. The latter had generally kept themselves out of tribal politics, and their interest had thus far been limited to the sections of the workers engaged in mining and industries. The leftist orientation to tribal politics meant a greater stress on the political education of workers and agrarian issues, a linking up of local and all-India politics, violence and militancy of means, and a better organization. There was also a commitment by all-India leftist parties to the concept of tribal autonomy as distinct from that of the formation of a tribal state.

Thirdly, as the political character of the Jharkhand movement receded in the background, the agrarian aspects came into prominence. The formal political slogan of a separate state has not been given up, but it has weakened, and there is greater stress on the nature and consequences of exploitation, isolation and neglect. There is a better articulated demand for a more dominant role for the tribals and Chotanagpuris in regional administration and better educational facilities and more employment opportunities. There is also a demand for restoration of alienated land and provision for legal and institutional safeguards to protect tribal interest and end all forms of exploitation. All parties are united in stressing the regional rather than the ethnic factor.

We may conceptualize the developments during this phase in terms of *i.* fragmentation of the tribal party and factionalization of tribal politics, *ii.* rise of urban pressure groups, and *iii.* political extremism, agrarian radicalism and cultural revivalism.

Fragmentation and Factionalization

The merger of the Jharkhand with the Congress shocked the hard core of the Jharkhandis who were keen to maintain a separate political identity, and some sections of the dominant Christian elite and missionaries who feared loss of the leverage they could exercise. It was also stated that the merger had not been ratified by the general body of the party and was, therefore, technically defective. In fact, no sooner was the merger effected than it began to be criticized by the rump. The behaviour of the leadership which had sought the merger and benefited from it did not help mutual bickerings and personal rivalries delayed the implementation of the terms of the merger and its consolidation. The attitude of those leaders who went out of the office became ambivalent. Though technically members of the Congress party, they encouraged criticism of the merger and worked secretly against it towards the close of 1966, Jaipal Singh, encouraged by the formation of the separate states of Haryana and Punjab, called upon his people to act in the following words:

‘The days of begging are gone. We shall now have to act in the Birsa Munda fashion to get our legitimate demands. Tribals should raise their heads against the wrong-doers and if necessary use bows and arrows’.

Nothing came of it. Reviving the old Jharkhand, as Jaipal Singh himself said, was like whipping a dead horse. There was a proposal to revive the old Adibasi Mahasabha, but this could not be done.

The absence of the old guards and of a charismatic leadership which had held the Jharkhand party together created confusion, and threw the political forces into disarray. As many as nine groups or parties sprung up to fill the vacuum created by the merger, and the rump body of the Jharkhand split up into four factions (statement-1).

We could briefly describe the processes of the split within the split. During the first phase (1963-68) as many as three groups claimed to represent the Jharkhand party. After the fourth general elections had decimated the party many attempts were made to unify the factions. But further split could not be averted. A faction of the party refused to recognize the seventy-one-man Executive Committee of the Central party. On 28 December, 1967 the All-India Jharkhand party was formed. One of its first acts was to declare the merger with the Congress effected in 1963 unconstitutional and void as it was not approved by the general body. This party began to split again in 1969-70 owing to the temperamental incompatibility and conflicts between its two leaders. One faction moved closer to the Congress(O) and the Jan Sangh and the other to the Congress (R). The latter enjoyed the support of the Church, which went to the length of cooperating even with non-tribals in order to checkmate the growing influences of the Jan Sangh on non-christian tribals. The first faction lost against the second in the Khunti parliamentary by-elections (1970) caused by the death of Jaipal Singh and the Torpa Assembly by-election. The split became permanent in 1971, the first faction retaining the name of the party and the second reverting to the old name, the Jharkhand party. At the same time both have been trying to extend their influence in neighbouring states by setting up candidates during election. There was hardly any difference of programme-content between them. One has concentrated its activities among, and draws support from, the Hos Singhbhum and the other from the Mundas of Ranchi. They contested elections separately and won ten seats in 1969 and eleven in 1972 in the Bihar Assembly and captured two parliamentary seats in 1971.

A major split in the old Jharkhand party occurred in 1968 when the Santhals separated themselves from the Chotanagpur tribals and formed their own party, which was named after the Santhal Insurrection (locally called Hul). The Santhals always nursed a grievance that though they were more numerous than the Mundas and Oraons, they did not command adequate influence in the Jharkhand movement. This simmering discontent had expressed itself in a demonstration against the Jharkhand leader, Jaipal Singh, in 1957. This explains why despite the attempts to widen the political base of the party to include parts of Singhbhum and Hazaribagh, it became essentially a Santhal organization. The Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand party was formed on 28 December, 1968. In the mid-term elections of 1969 it fielded

eighteen candidates out of which six won in the Santhal Parganas. It voiced demands of a local nature such as introduction of the Roman script for the Santhal language, creation of a separate division for the Santhal Parganas, and for reaching agrarian reforms to end tribal exploitation, and provide security for tribal people. In the last aspect it was a step ahead of its counterpart in Chotanagpur. The party also secured adequate representation as ministers of the changing coalition governments at state level. It split up into two factions in 1972 for the same reasons as the All-India Jharkhand party did: personal differences and rivalries among leaders. The break-away faction called itself the Progressive Hul Jharkhand party. The result of the factional rivalries was that the two groups could capture only three seats in the 1972 elections.

Apart from difference of a personal nature among its leaders there was also a growing cleavage on communal and denominational line among members behind the split. Paradoxically, the fragmentation of the party and factionalization of politics intensified radicalism. The language of the pamphlets issued by different groups, the nature of the demands, the mobilization of the people through processions and demonstrations were not in the least affected. In fact the processions were larger and the demands became more strident.

Rise of Urban Pressure Groups

Another aspect of this phase was the rise and development of the urban pressure groups led by the educated tribals, mostly Christian and centred at industrial complexes to demand jobs for tribal youths in administration and industrial undertakings. This, in fact, was the core of the demands shrouded in familiar political verbiage. The process of the formation and the development of the pressure groups is epitomized in the Birsa Seva Dal (BSD) which emerged as the most important, if not the only one of the urban groups. It was essentially a socio-political organization and not a political party as it did not contest any election. Formed with the objective of securing a better deal for tribals in matters of employment, it functioned mainly at the two industrial centres of Jamshedpur and Ranchi, and only occasionally at others. Behind its formation there were two influences at work. First, the missionaries of different denominations had been shocked by the fragmentation of the political structure of the Jharkhand party and were dismayed at the erosion of Christian leadership as revealed by the election results. Therefore, a new organization had to be established to safeguard the interests of the educated tribals in urban areas. Secondly, the extremist elements were fairly active seeking to establish a base of their influence and operation in the tribal region. They managed to influence the BSD ideology, programmes and methods considerably. The co-existence between the pro-missionary and pro-CPM-(L) was not always happy, and subsequently there was a split. But the two worked together for some time. The name of the tribal hero Birsa Munda who led the uprising of 1899-1900 against the missionaries and the British Government

lent to the Dal was therefore a little ironical, but it served as a draw.

Though the idea of forming an organization had occurred as early as June, 1966, an ad-hoc body could be set up only after the fourth general elections in 1967. Later an organization with field level functionaries came into existence. The constitution of the organization spoke generally of the Commonalty of interests of tribals, backward classes and other 'exploited sections' of the Indian population. However its objectives were primarily geared to securing the interests of tribal people. It demanded action to:

- i. bring about a wide awakening among tribal people to secure their deliverance;
- ii. remove fear, inferiority complex, sense of isolation and correct the habit of silent submission to tyranny and exploitation;
- iii. organize tribals to secure the fundamental rights and democratic/regional rights;
- iv. end and expose colonial exploitation which was the root cause of all sufferings;
- v. secure priority in the matter of providing employment in administrative and private institutions;
- vi. prevent loot of the land and secure restoration of the alienated land;
- vii. establish the rights of tribals to secure admission to educational institutions on a priority basis;
- viii. organize workers and students to secure their demands;
- ix. instil love and devotion for tribal culture; and
- x. forge unity among the people and teach them how to exercise their collective will to secure their rights.

The action-programme however, was restricted to securing employment and admission to educational institutions, amidst the slogans for the regionalization (even tribalization) of the local administration.

The BSD constitution³ stressed the role of collective leadership to guide the people through the struggle. This was not achieved. Factional rivalries broke up the organization. The number of its members fluctuated around 2,500.

There were two phases in the development of the BSD movement. The first, from 1967 to 1969 was a militant phase. Violent methods of struggle to secure tribal rights were advocated. Meetings, processions of the youth armed with bows and arrows, gheraos and celebrations of the Birsa Day were the modes of mobilization. BSD demanded creation of a separate state, expulsion of the non-Chotanagpuris, agrarian reforms and measures against money-lenders.

There was a series of violent incidents involving grabbing of urban land⁴ (at Jamshedpur), clashes between tribals and non-tribal 'outsiders', which

culminated in two major incidents in 1968. The first occurred at Chiri (Ranchi) on 2 June, 1968. A tribal crowd surrounded a money-lender's house to protest against the money-lender's encroachment on a piece of land belonging to a tribal Christian. The money-lender's son panicked and opened fire. When the mob returned, it ran into the police who opened fire, killing six persons. The BSD leaders were arrested. An impressive procession, fifteen thousand strong, was taken out on 9 June, 1968 at Ranchi. Demand for an enquiry into the incident was conceded. The commission which went into the incident blamed the police for its failure to take preventive measures to forestall the clash.

The second incident occurred at Chainpur (Ranchi) on 27 October, 1968. This area was heavily populated by tribal Christians, and BSD had been fairly active, holding meetings and staging demonstrations in support of local demands. A small incident involving illtreatment of a tribal by a doctor sparked off the agitation. A large militant crowd assaulted the doctor, drove him out of the station, and attacked the police station. The police opened fire, killing three persons. There were minor repercussions of this incident in Ranchi and elsewhere.

The situation became worse in 1969. In March of that year the CPM-(L) launched a Naxalbari type of movement. Some elements of the BSD supported its pro-Mao slogans which appeared on the walls in Ranchi town and elsewhere. But the movement failed to strike any root among the Ranchi tribals.

After 1967 the second phase of the BSD movement began. The influence of CPM-(L) and the missionaries waned. BSD pledged itself to play a constitutional role and adopt peaceful methods of struggle. Violent incidents ceased. The organization was undermined by conflicts between two factions. Some of the BSD leaders sought refuge in the Jharkhand splinter groups. The BSD has almost ceased to exist except in Jamshedpur where it shows some activity, now and then.

Political Extremism, Agrarian Radicalism and Cultural Revivalism

The Naxalite movement started in the heavily forested regions of Chotanagpur in 1969. The movement continued for two years. There were 183 incidents involving murder, dacoity, bomb explosions, and violent clashes. By the middle of 1971 the Naxalite activity had been contained, their topmost leaders arrested, and their party headquarters liquidated. There was a lull for about a year and a half. From mid-1973 another phase of a Naxalite movement began. There have been nearly eighteen incidents so far involving murder, and dacoity. The Naxalites are seeking to influence the tribals who have formed a joint front with another semi-aboriginal or detribalized community, the Mahtos, in Hazaribagh and Dhanbad which were not among the strongholds of the Jharkhand movements.

The Mahto were the first peasant community to resist British rule in Chotanagpur; later historical accounts mention conflicts between the Munda and

Mahto. From 1920⁵ onwards the Mahto of Chotanagpur sought an identity with the Kurmi of other parts of Bihar and, later, an all-India identity through the Kurmi Mahasabha. The Maratha Kunbi were discovered as the lost kinsmen, and so the name of Shivaji, supposed to be a Kunbi, was given to the Samaj. The Shivaji Samaj (1969) highlights the backwardness⁶ of this sturdy peasant community and seeks to remove it by forging a political alliance with the Santhals.

The Mahto and Santhals have been traditional enemies: the former, as a relatively well-to-do peasantry have exploited the latter. Their political alliance was not without opposition, doubt, and fear voiced by some sections of the two communities. Nevertheless, the leaders of the two communities were able to bring them together. The Mahtos thought that by placing the Santhals in the forefront they would be able to protect their interest. One does not know how long this honeymoon will last. A result of this alliance was the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (1973) with the objectives of forming a separate Jharkhand state, ending exploitation of tribals by non-tribals, and securing preferential treatment for the sons of the soil in the matter of employment. The Shivaji Samaj has merged with the new organisation.

✓ The Morcha combines in its operations elements of agrarian radicalism and cultural revivalism. ✓ As mentioned earlier the Jharkhand had no agrarian programme of action. BSD despite its attempt to establish a rapport with the tribal peasants remained essentially an urban party. The Santhals were more sensitive to the agrarian question. The agrarian movement among the Santhals—other tribes have also been affected—had been erupting at harvest time in all those areas of Bihar (particularly Purnea and the Santhal Parganas) where the Santhals are engaged as labourers and crop-sharers. The Santhals are now politically-oriented, they are better organized and more militant than other tribes. The most important series of incidents occurred in 1968 in the Santhal Parganas, when the Santhals forcibly harvested crops standing in their land, illegally occupied by money-lenders. Yet it is striking that there was little bloodshed. From then on, such incidents have become part of the agrarian landscape of Bihar.

The Morcha has launched an operation to recover alienated land from money-lenders and big peasants during the last three years. There have been 120 violent incidents including 48 of looting of crops or forcible harvesting of crops standing on lands in illegal possession of money-lenders, 29 attacks on 'exploiters', 2 of arson and 28 murders. In the process there have been five incidents of clash with the police. The largest number of incidents (69) occurred in 1974. Since then the number of incidents has declined. Recently, the Morcha has come out in support of the Prime Minister's 20-point programme.

Though the Mahto's alliance with the Santhals gives the movement an extra ethnic dimension, the movement is developing into a pan-Santhal awakening. The Hul Jharkhand has supported it. The Santhal of Hazaribagh, Giridih and Dhanbad are forming a common front with those of the Santhal Parganas.

The Santhal leader, Sibu Soren, has acquired something of a charisma, which is so typical of the nativistic movement.

‘Through a systematic campaign, all sorts of stories are spread among the gullible tribals about Sibu Soren’s supernatural powers. It is said that he crosses rivers on a motor-cycle, is not burnt by fire, dives into a pond and comes out through some hole somewhere in the land, bullets cannot pierce his body and so on. It is propagated that Sibu Soren “Chando Bonga” (the Greatest God) and Indira Gandhi has granted him a licence to rule this part of Jharkhand territory. Surprisingly, not only some Adibasi officers of the state government, but also some others are very soft towards this extremist leader and let him have his way’.⁷

Elements of the ancient tribal self-government have been revived. The Baisi (courts) functions as a court without fees or pleaders and deals out simple justice. A volunteer force has been raised. Subscriptions are being locally collected. Tribal traditions of collective farming and preservations of jungles, pastures, and common land have also been revived: a common grain pool has been created. A recent study provides further information:

‘The poor peasant movement (as this movement is described) at Tundi (Dhanbad) has successfully defied the state power as yet. It has not only retrieved the illegally alienated land and redistributed it among the poor peasants but has launched joint cultivation and community irrigation programmes thereby raising the gross area sown and the agricultural production. Until the agricultural year 1973-74, they were having only one crop, i.e., kharif paddy, in the villages. This year they jointly cultivated and harvested wheat on 15 acres of land, there is standing summer paddy on 75 acres of land. The area sown more than once is now 15 per cent of the Net Area sown. The activists in the movement now propose to go ahead with the reclamation of land for cultivation. The various measures which have been undertaken have not only improved the economic condition of the poor peasants and transformed them to the category of poor-middle peasants but have given them something more—a fresh and free air to breathe. The jungles are being preserved. The stocks are being raised with enthusiasm and devotion. They now know what freedom and democracy really means. It is now an area which knows no scarcity but it knows no peace either’.⁸

The movement has not yet turned against the government. There is another model of cultural revivalism among the Santhal of the Santhal Parganas. A Sidhu-Kanhu Baisi, named after the two heroes of the Santhal Hul was formed in February, 1966 to:

i. Speed up tempo of education among the Santhal, the Paharia and the other tribes;

- ii. Improve tribal economy; and
- iii. End tribal exploitation.

The Baisi also exhorted the Santhal to expel the *dikus* and prevent them from cultivating land. Plays were composed and staged highlighting *diku* tyranny. The ancient system of village headmanship was sought to be revived. There was an attempt to purify the Santhal religion of the so-called Hindu influences which included participation in the Durga and Kali Pujas. The Baisi subsequently split up along communal lines. An All-India Sidhu Kanhu Baisi was formed in February 1970 in opposition to the parent body.

Ethnicity, Regionalism and National Politics

Few ethnic movements can remain in a state of absolute political isolation. As mentioned earlier, the Adibasi Mahasabha enjoyed the support of the All-India Muslim League; the former also claimed the support of the Forward Bloc, (the name of Subhas Chandra Bose was dragged in), and the Congress Socialist Party, a few local members of which were to join the Jharkhand Party later. The Congress rejected the Mahasabha demand to concede ethnicity as the basis of the formation of provinces. After independence the Jharkhad party allied itself with the Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana's Janta Party, formed in 1949, which had emerged as a strong rival of the Congress in northern Chotanagpur. The Janta party commanded considerable support from the peasantry on account of the popular measures introduced by its founder such as remission of land revenue, settlement of lands with ryots on very advantageous terms and throwing open forest for their use. He had also managed to rally round the party ex-zamindars by promising restoration of their zamindaris. This party had captured 11 seats in 1952 and 23 in 1957 in Chotanagpur, emerging as the second biggest party next to the Jharkhand. In 1962 it merged with the Swatantra party and improved its strength by capturing 22 seats in their region at the expense of the Jharkhand. The compulsion to seek fresh alliances became evident to the Jharkhand Party. A resolution forming an opposition block with the Praja Socialist Party was adopted on 8 July, 1962. Negotiations were started with the CPI for evolving a strategy on the labour and industrial fronts. The Jharkhand's relations with the Congress were close in Orissa in the mid-1950s. The Congress had also emerged weaker in 1962. While the Jharkhand needed strong alliances, a faction in the Bihar Congress needed its support too, in the power game being played. The Jharkhand leaders thought that they could press for the formation of a separate state from the Congress platform by joining it. The Congress, on the other hand, was ready to concede the need for accelerated regional development in return for the support and merger of the Jharkhand party. The agreement on merger, mentioned above, finalized on 20 June, 1973 stipulated:

- i. Constitution of a Development Board for Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas and parts of Bhagalpur, Monghyr and Shahabad districts for the purpose of economic, industrial, agricultural and educational development of the people and the general development of this area as a whole; and
- ii. Merger of the Congress and the Jharkhand Party and constitution of a Sub-Committee of the Bihar Pradesh Congress to coordinate political and organizational activities in the region.

Despite the fragmentation of the party the splinter groups have been seeking support at the all-India level for the formation of a separate state in the context of a rational re-organization of states. On 10 September, 1974, three regional parties, namely, Maha Vidarbha Sangharsha Samiti, the Vishal Harayana Party and the Jharkhand Party jointly proposed to hold a convention of all regional political parties in India to chalk out a programme for reorganization of the states. The splitting up of bigger states became necessary, according to the spokesmen of this party, to eliminate regional imbalances and economic backwardness. The creation of similar states would strengthen the country economically and politically, it was stressed.

None of the all-India parties has committed itself to the formation of a Jharkhand state. The Jan Sangh sees behind the move the inspiration of Christian missionaries and anti-national forces.

‘The separate Jharkhand State movement which was encouraged and abetted by Christian missionaries in the fifties, is in a sense no longer a sectarian movement. It has found new advocates from diverse sections of the populace. The movement which appeared to have collapsed a couple of years ago, gathered momentum in recent times and the creation of Meghalaya to satisfy the aspirations of the Hills people of Assam, emboldened the separatists political forces to launch the movement with renewed vigour for securing, in a constitutional way, a full-fledged state or an autonomous State within the State of Bihar’.

The Congress party never accepted ethnicity—except recently in the case of the creation of north eastern states—as the basis for the formation of states; it has favoured language as the factor determining reorganization of the states. The Prime Minister has rejected the demand on the ground that it was not practicable and would have repercussions in the country. The President of the Bihar Pradesh Congress had described the movement as ‘politically motivated, inspired by a parochical approach, a sinister move raised mainly by northern Biharis settled in the region, which would perpetuate the north Bihari settlers’ exploitation of the tribals’¹². The Communist party has rejected the demand and instead set in explicit terms the objective of regional autonomy for predominantly tribal areas of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas and of

economic and cultural upliftment of the Adibasis. In a resolution adopted in May, 1975 it was stated:

I. The existing organisations of the Adibasis like the Jharkhand party, Hul Jharkhand party, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Birsa Sevalal, Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Parishad lack clear political perspective of tribals;

II. If a separate Jharkhand State of their conception comprising Chotanagpur plateau and some areas of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and West Bengal was set up, it would reduce the tribals to a state of perpetual minority of one-third in population. As a result, they would not be in a position to solve any of the political and economic problems facing the tribals, instead enable reactionary forces to secure firmer strangle-hold for plundering both the tribal and non-tribal people, and

III. Tribal regional councils, according to the constitutional provisions, should be formed, for the two compact tribal majority areas in Bihar, namely (a) consisting of the major parts of Latehar Subdivision of Palamau, the Ranchi district (except six Anchals), Singhbhum and Hazaribagh district and (b) the Santhal area consisting of parts of the Santhal Parganas and the Dhanbad district.¹³

Electoral Politics and Erosion of Ethnicity

Nothing illustrates more graphically the transition from ethnicity to regionalism than the electoral processes (Charts I and II). The first general elections marked the zenith of the popularity of the ethnic movement. The size of valid votes polled by the Jharkhand party remained an all-time record: 7.66 lakh; so did the number of seats captured by it, namely, 33 in the Bihar Assembly, three in the Bihar council and five in the Parliament. The Jharkhand had been able to capture not only the reserved but also a few general seats. The second general elections held after the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission resulted in a slight erosion in the popularity of the Jharkhand Party because its demand had not been conceded. Despite a rise in the number of voters, the votes polled by the Jharkhand was smaller in 1957, though the total number of seats bagged by it in the Bihar Assembly remained almost intact. The Party had also cast its net wider and won five seats in the Orissa Assembly and polled three per cent of the votes. The third general election, following the mid-term poll in Orissa in which the Jharkhand Party had been wiped out, came as a shock to its leaders. The number of votes polled plummeted to 4.67 lakh in 1962 as against 7.51 lakh in 1957; the number of seats captured by it was reduced to 20. The party had lost not only some general seats but also reserved seats to its erstwhile ally the Janta party (now Swatantra), the Jan Sangh, the Congress and the CPI which had made significant inroads into its strongholds. Following the merger with the Congress in 1963 the splinter groups contested the fourth general

election as independents. The result was a disaster. The trends noticed in the third general elections developed further: the JanSangh, Congress, Swatantra and CPI gained while the splinter groups could capture only eight seats and 1.72 lakh of valid votes. This was the lowest-ever performance. A reason for this was the splitting of votes. For example, there were as many as 119 candidates contesting 15 seats in Ranchi as against 73 in 1962, 69 in 1957, and 59 in 1952.

There was some compensation, however, in the gains which the party later registered in Orissa and West Bengal. The State of political instability which supervened with the formation of the coalition governments in the eastern states after 1967, enabled the Jharkhand splinter groups to play a significant role in power politics and wrest some gains. They were able to regain lost ground in the mid-term elections in 1969. The pendulum swung back to the 1962 position. The Jharkhand groups captured 17 seats and 3.17 lakh of valid votes. The advantage thus gained was pressed home by the different groups in the state of continuing uncertainty to gain further concessions. Even so there could be no return to the 1957 position. The decline continued. While the Jharkhand crumbled in its *heartland*, it registered a significant advance in the adjoining areas of Orissa and West Bengal, winning four and two seats respectively in the 1971 election. It was a creditable achievement indeed because in West Bengal the Jharkhand had never won a single seat before, and in Orissa it had staged a comeback after 1961. The Jharkhand also became the third constituent of the United Front in Orissa, the two others being the Utkal Congress and the Swatantra Party, and Siddhilal Murmu was appointed a minister. In Bengal, too, one of the two Jharkhandis, became a minister in the non-Marxist United Front government, which assumed office on 2 April, 1971. In Bihar the representatives of the different Jharkhand parties were always represented on the coalition governments. The 1972 elections to the Bihar Assembly witnessed the Jharkhand suffer its greatest setback: it could capture only seven seats and poll 3.6 lakh votes while the Congress captured 47 out of the 79 seats in the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region. As the *Statesman* observed: this 'clearly indicated repudiation by the Adibasis of the Jharkhand party's demand for a separate state of the Chotanagpur with the Santhal Parganas'.¹⁴ The party was also routed in the Orissa elections in 1974; the Congress swept the polls in the tribal areas which were the strongholds of the Gantantra (now Swatantra) and the Jharkhand. This underlines the growing integration of the tribals into the all-India political systems. But this statement must be qualified by the rider that election results are only one of the many indicators of the integrative process.

Politicization of the tribes has been rather slow. A recent study of the electoral politics in the tribal region has underlined this as well the 'regional' characteristics of tribal voting:

- i. Voter participation in tribal constituencies is lower than in non-tribal

constituencies in almost all the states of India, though the turn out in the first has been increasing—in Bihar from 43% to 54%—albeit at a slower rate than in the second;

ii. Tribal parties won their victories with a wide margin in the core (resolved) constituencies, showing cohesive backing by tribal supporters;

iii. Tribal preferences have not yet stabilised though the pro-Congress trends since 1967 are clear; and

iv. Tribal and non-tribal constituencies situated in the same zone almost react in a similar manner, and there are “distinct regional patterns in the electoral behaviour of tribal constituencies reflecting not only differences between regions but also important differences among tribes themselves, their demographic distribution, levels of modernisation, intensity of self-awareness and their relationship with State and Central authority”.¹⁵

Between the Scheduled Tribes and other communities, the first have always shown a greater enthusiasm for participation in the elections. This was noticed even in the first general election:

‘The election symbol of the Jharkhand Party was the cock and they convened their meetings by the sound of crowing. Hundreds of people gathered whenever they heard human beings crowing. Even the illiterate, old and short-sighted women made sure that the ballot box had the symbol of cock before casting their votes. They stood in long queues exactly in the same order in which their names occurred on the electoral rolls. The tribal people showed far greater cohesiveness and civic sense than the high caste of people of other regions’.¹⁶

The report on the first general election also observed as follows :

‘The Jharkhand along with the Socialist and the Congress was the best organised party—their policies and programmes were well-known. The methods of canvassing were personal contact, distribution of leaflets and public meetings.’¹⁷

‘Voters from the Scheduled Tribes and backward classes, generally, recorded votes at a higher rate than voters from other sections of the people. The punctuality, discipline and orderliness displayed by the Scheduled Tribe voters have been particularly mentioned by several presiding officers. A parliamentary returning officer reports that the percentage of electors who recorded their votes is 30 to 35 in urban areas and 40 in rural areas, which among the Scheduled Tribes electors it is 70 to 80’.¹⁸

Inter-denominational and inter-tribal equation within the Tribal Movement

The foregoing account should not create the impression that the ethnic movement has been monolithic without any strains of inter-denominational competition among its Christian members or inter-tribal rivalry. The semblance

of unity forged and maintained for about two decades barely concealed the currents and cross-currents of differences arising out of the consideration of tribal and denominational interests. In the first phase of the tribal movement the denominational inspiration behind the political demands was only too evident. In the second phase, the Anglicans and Lutherans dominated the Unnati Samaj movement and provided its leadership; the Roman Catholics kept themselves out of it and formed their own Catholic Sabha to present their case before the government. The Catholic Sabha continued to maintain its identity even after all other bodies had merged to form the Adibasi Mahasabha. The latter organization maintained a delicate balance among the three denominations by providing suitable representation to their interests in the organization and leadership. If the president was an Anglican, the secretary was either a Lutheran or a Catholic. This equation was continued into the Jharkhand Party, even though the Party was dominated by the Protestant Christians. In 1962, following the reconstitution of the party its Catholic secretary was dropped, which caused resentment among the Catholic supporters of the Jharkhand. The latter were always suspected of maintaining an ambivalent attitude towards the tribal movement. It was stated that the Catholics were guided by global considerations in their crusade against Communism; they preferred order to chaos in India and so they lent indirect support to the Congress candidates in elections. In the 1974 Orissa election, the Roman Catholic Church was reported to have issued secretly a 'fervent' appeal to the electorate to give 'mass support' to the Congress; the local branches issued a 'pastoral letter' quoting the secret circular to the Christian Adivasis who constituted an overwhelming majority in Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. This was a windfall for the Congress which swept in polls.¹⁹

The Protestant Missions, Lutherans and Anglicans, have been almost Indianized, and they have encouraged and practised grass-root democracy in electing their Church bodies (*mandlis*). This explains their consistent support to the tribal movement. They still form the core of the Jharkhand groups.

The militant movements in Chotanagpur have been led by the Kolarian tribes, the Munda, Ho and the Santhal, who have been dominant communities, less exposed to external influences and more cohesive. The Oraon have lived longer in exposed regions, and have been less militant and more resilient. Both the Munda and the Oraon joined the Sardar Movement which sought to establish the peasant rights of the tribal people, but the Oraons broke off in mid-1880s. The Munda provided the leadership for the students' movement in 1915-20. The Oraon constituted the leadership of the Unnati Samaj Movement; the Munda kept out of it and formed their own Munda Sabha. Except in the early phase of the Adibasi Mahasabha, the Munda remained the dominant element in it. The Jharkhand Party had its strongholds in the Ho, the Munda and the Santhal regions. Some sections of the Oraons had become a little lukewarm in their support later, and with pro-Congress *Tana Bhagats* in their ranks, they switched their support to the Congress and the Jan Sangh—

the popular 1967 votes polled in favour of later work up from 17.2 in 1967 to 33.2 per cent in 1969—and have continued to support the Congress since the Jharkhand parties have their bases now among distinct sub-ethnic groups: the Hul-Jharkhand is entirely Santhal now; the All-India Jharkhand Party (Bagun Group) as mentioned earlier, draws its support mainly from the Hos of Singhbhum; and the other Jharkhand Party relies on the Munda.

An interesting sidelight is provided by the fact that the major tribes have generally dominated the elections while minor tribes have played a smaller role. For example, out of 32 seats captured by the Jharkhand Party in the 1952 elections the Santhals accounted for seven, the Munda three, the Ho five, and the Oraon seven, while the smaller tribes such as the Kharia and the Kherward got only two seats and one seat respectively. In 1967, again, while the Santhals had captured ten, the Oraon seven, the Ho six, and the Munda five, the Chero could get only one seat out of the 29 reserved seats. The parliamentary seats have always been captured by major tribes. A reason for the dominant role of the major tribes could be their relatively strong economic base and cohesive social organization. They are settled peasants while minor tribes are primarily artisans and craftsmen, or are engaged in shifting cultivation.

In the first three general elections Christian candidates were mostly elected from Ranchi and Santhal Parganas, while non-Christian candidates won mainly from Singhbhum and Palamau. The number of Christian candidates has been gradually declining. In 1967 while non-Christians captured 75.8 per cent the Christians could capture only 24.2 per cent of the reserved seats in the Bihar Assembly. A similar pattern also emerged in the parliamentary elections. This trend has persisted since. The erosion of Christian leadership has had its repercussions elsewhere.

While the major tribes first supported the Jharkhand Party and later the Congress, some of the minor tribes have always been pro-Congress. For example, the Santhal's neighbours, the Paharia who benefited from the welfare schemes spearheaded by Congress-supported voluntary agencies, the Asurs of Ranchi and the Kherward of Palamau have generally voted for the Congress. The Paharia had even organized a Yugavasi Sabha against the Adibasi Mahasabha. Even among the major tribes the Hinduized Bhagats, the *Sapha Hor* among the Santhals, the thread-wearing Santhals in Hazaribagh and *Tana Bhagats* among the Oraon have always been pro-Congress.

Conclusion

In the foregoing pages we have analyzed the processes of the formation of a purely tribal ethnic movement (1896-1949). The impulse behind this came from the missionaries and Christian students. From an urban movement (1920-39), it developed into a pan-tribal movement covering major regions of tribal Bihar and embracing both Christian and non-Christian tribals, the former playing a dominant role. We have discussed the changed circumstances which

led to the birth of the Jharkhand Party after the country's independence. Ever since the tribal movement has opened its door to all non-Chotanagpuris and stressed its regional character.

This was understandable. Tribal ethnicity in a multi-ethnic society characterized by economic inter-dependence and ritualities among different communities had a different course of development in Chotanagpur unlike the North-East; separatism did not develop into secessionism. The constitutions of all tribal parties speak of a set of regional objectives and programmes of action. This has been due to the realization that tribals do not form the majority in Chotanagpur as a whole and that there are backward communities, in this backward region, which could also be brought together on a common political platform.

However, [the failure of the Jharkhand movement to develop into a full-fledged regional movement so far may be explained by many factors. First, its appeal to the non-tribal sections of the Chotanagpuris was small, because it was essentially a tribal party, and the tribals and non-tribals were not on the best of terms. Secondly, its past record of alliances with the forces which had worked against the national movement and remained 'loyalist' cost it the sympathy and support of a large section of the ruling elite. Thirdly, its structure contained many contradictions which sharpened and multiplied as the cleavage between the Christian and non-Christian tribals deepened. Lastly, the region had always been exposed to the operation of pan-Indian forces. The impact of development programmes and macro-political systems and the merger with the Congress considerably weakened the demand for a separate state. The slogan of a Jharkhand state has, however, not been given up.] But the possibilities of the Jharkhand Party capturing its pre-1962 position of strength appear remote. With a firm and strong Union Government rejecting the demand for reorganization of states, and the Jharkhand Parties further moving away from each other the issue can not be reopened at present.

It is paradoxical that what the old Jharkhand Party with its impressive electoral achievements could not gain in its heyday, 1949-63, the fragmented Jharkhand Parties and urban pressure-groups have achieved since 1967. There had been no participation of tribal elements in the Bihar government from 1950 to 1959. A tribal minister was inducted in 1960. Since 1963, and particularly since 1967, the tribal leaders have played their cards skillfully; there have been adequate representation in the governments not only of the two major tribal regions, Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas, but also participation by both Christian and non-Christian elements in them. For the first time, tribal leaders head as many as 11 corporations set up by the government. A major demand of the tribal has also been met by setting up the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana development authority, which embodies the concept of regional development and creation of a separate pool of resources from which tribals will be the main but not the exclusive beneficiaries. The widespread unrest in tribal regions also influenced the passage of a number of agrarian

measures including many pieces of legislation, which place stringent curbs on alienation of tribal land and provide for debt redemption, credit support, and allotment of homestead sites. Restoration of land alienated during a period of 30 years, which has been a major demand since the Sardar movement of 1869 has been made possible through an enactment. About 12,000 acres of land has been restored. There has also been impressive progress in providing employment to tribals in administration and industrial undertakings. Almost all tribal groups including the radical elements have welcomed the Prime Minister's 20-point programme as an instrument for accelerated development and radical transformation in tribal areas.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This is a summary of the third part of a three-volume project undertaken under the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship on tribal society. This third volume relating to tribal movements in Chotanagpur (1920-63) draws upon the material collected from primary and secondary sources including private papers, proceedings of the political departments of provincial governments, newspapers etc. This will complete the author's trilogy on Chotanagpur, the two other books being on Birsa Munda and the Sardar movement. Part of the material presented in this paper had been incorporated in the papers presented earlier at the Chicago and the Harvard Universities, in a paper entitled "From Movement to Party : A Study in Tribal Politics in Middle India, 1920-63" presented at the Nehru Memorial Museum on March 29, 1973, and in "Chotanagpur: a Centenary Overview", *The Bihar Herald Centenary Number*, Patna, 1975.
2. 'Address not formally presented', Appendix 1 presented in India to His Excellency the Secretary of State for India, East Vol. XVIII, London, 1918, British Museum.
3. *The Constitution of the Birsa Seva Dal* (in Hindi), December 10, 1971.
4. In Jamshedpur, for example, the BSD volunteers grabbed large chunks of valuable urban land, sold it in pieces to non-Bihari businessmen who in fact abetted this operation. Colonies named after tribal leaders were established, where only a minority of tribals lived, the majority being the non-Biharis connected with the industries.
5. See for example *Census of India 1931*, Bihar & Orissa pp. 263 & 268. The Kurmi or the Mahto in Chotanagpur were originally recognized as a scheduled tribe; in 1931, they were descheduled as a tribe as they claimed the status of kshatriyas. In Palamau, like the Kahar they wear the sacred thread and say that they belong to the 'karo bans'. See 'The Kurmi of Chota Nagpur', Appendix V, Bihar and Orissa, Vol. VII, Part-I, Report, pp. 291-94.
6. *The Searchlight*, Patna, June 1, 1975, reported that the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana Kurmi Mahasabha had met at Ramgarh and urged upon the Governor of Bihar to (a) fix by an ordinance the lowest marriageable age of a Kurmi girl at 14 and that of a Kurmi boy at 18 and make violation of these age-limits a cognizable offence; (b) include all the communities figuring in Annexure-I of the backward classes in the State of Bihar in the tribal list; and (c) rehabilitate the persons displaced by the construction of the Subarnarekha and Khalkai dam near Chandil.
7. *The Economic Times*, May, 13, 1975.
8. Pradhan H. Prasad, "Agrarian Unrest and Economic Changes in Rural Bihar : Three Case Studies", *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 14, 1975.
9. *The Searchlight*, Patna, September 10, 1974.
10. *The Organiser*, July 29, 1972.
11. *The Indian Nation*, Patna, April 25, 1975.
12. *Ibid*, January 12, 1975.
13. *The Patriot*, New Delhi, May 11, 1975.
14. *The Statesman*, March 21, 1972.
15. Myron Weiner & John Osgoodfield, *Electoral Politics in the Indian States: Three disadvantaged Sectors*, Vol. II, pp. 78-119.
16. *Report of the First General Elections under the Constitution of India in Bihar*, 1951-52, (1953), p. 13.
17. S. V. Kogekar and R. L. Park (ed.), *Report on the Indian General Elections—1951-52*, (1956), pp. 29-30.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
19. *The Indian Express*, February 18, 1974.

CHART-I
PERFORMANCE OF THE JHARKHAND PARTY

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969 (B.H.A.)	1971 (H.P.)	1972 (B.H.A.)	1974
(A) BIHAR								
Candidates set up	6	14 (2 retired)	11	NA (As independents)		21	106	—
	44	96 (16 withdrew or retired)	75	NA	24 (Hj 13 Ind.) 11			
Bihar Legislative Assembly.								
Candidates who forfeited their deposits.	NA	4	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	—
Seats won	NA	27	36	NA	NA	NA	NA	—
	3	5	3	1	—	2	—	—
Bihar Legislative Assembly	33	32	20	8 (As independents)	17 (Hj-7 Ind-10)	—	8	—
	3	—	467,338 (14.79)	143,470	X	343,314**	X	—
Bihar Council	749,702 (14.76)	751,830 (14.79)	467,338 (4.70)					
House of people	766,366 (15.21)	726,936 (13.75)	432,644 (4.39)	172,123	229,327*	—	361,187***	—
Bihar Legislative Assembly								
Percentage of valid votes to the total.	3.3	7.34 (29.5+)	4.00 (17(-12.5))	NA	NA	1.27	2.09	—
Variation	—			—	—	—	—	—
Orissa Assembly	X	5	25 contested all lost (1961 Jan)	X	—	—	4 (out of 15)	16 contested all lost
(B)								
West Bengal Assembly	X	X	X	X	—	2	—	—

Source : Reports of the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth (typed) general elections in the Bihar. Report of the mid-term Elections in Bihar 1969.

* This is a tentative estimate worked out on the basis of the votes polled by the independent candidates in the scheduled tribe reserved constituencies.

** Report on the Fourth General Election to the House of People in India (1971) Vol. II, (1973).

*** Report of the Fifth General Election, Bihar

CHART-II

PARTYWISE BREAK-DOWN OF THE ELECTED SCHEDULED TRIBE CANDIDATES IN THE RESERVED OR CASTE CONSTITUENCIES IN BIHAR.

[illegible]

STATEMENT—I

BIOGRAPHIES OF TRIBAL PARTIES/ORGANIZATIONS

1. *Akhil Bhartiya Adibasi Bikas Parishad*

Founded by Kartik Oraon in 1966, it seeks to develop tribals in all spheres of life. As non-Christian tribals have not been able to avail themselves of the facilities of education and opportunities for development, so they have to be developed first. A cause for their backwardness is that they have left their ancient culture.

The organization has 1,114 members. It draws support from the non-Christian tribes. It has a President, Kartik Oraon, five Vice-Presidents from all states of middle-India and 33 members on its executive committee.

2. *Birsa Seva Dal (BSD)*

Its organization and programme have been discussed earlier. It became somewhat active in 1972-73 and sought to organize a popular movement of Chotanagpuri to achieve local-self government and full employment for the local people. Its membership declined in 1972 to 1,365, the largest number being in Jamshedpur (700), Singhbhum (500), and Ranchi (150). Its President Laloo Oraon contested as a S.S.P. candidate in Khunti Parliamentary constituency (1970) and lost. Its secretary Moses Guria has now joined the AIJ (Bagun group).

3. *Chotanagpur Bhumi Rakshak Party*

Founded in October, 1968 by the disgruntled elements of the Jharkhand Party to secure a Jharkhand state for the people of Chotanagpur irrespective of caste, creed and religion and to protect the interests of Chotanagpuris and uphold the rights of the sons of the soil. Contested the elections in 1969 and 1972 and lost. In the second case its candidate could secure only 1,274 votes.

4. *Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Parishad*

Founded in September, 1966, with a view to promoting the welfare of the Adibasi people in industrial area and secure their employment.

The Parishad consists of the following persons:

President	:	Justice Richard
Working President	:	Jhaman Singh
General Secretary	:	C. K. P. Damta
Secretary	:	R. Purti
Active member	:	Abdul Manan
		Habibullah
		Eta Oran
		Bir Singh
Membership	:	200
Area of operation	:	Ranchi

5. *Jharkhand Raj Morcha*

Formed in May 1968 to promote the interest of all Jharkhandis, inhabitants of the Jharkhand, irrespective of caste, creed, sect and community. All were to unite under its banner to promote the Jharkhand movement. Believes in peaceful methods, constitutional means, truth and non-violence.

Jogesh Oraon, its president later became the secretary of another organization to protect the interests of the persons displaced by the Hatia Project. The Morcha has become moribund.

6. *Parha Samaj*

An organisation of the non-Christian Saonsar Adibasis, seeks a return to the old tradition. It is not a political body. Exists only in the Gumla subdivision of the Ranchi district. Enjoys support of the Congress and Jan Sangh.

Other organizations

There are as many as six small organizations, all led by tribals to protect and promote their interests. They are (i) Veer Biren Party, (ii) Adibasi Chhatra Sangh (the radical students' organization), (iii) Chotanagpur Samyukta Morcha (led by J. C. Heyward, an old guard of the Adibasi Mahasabha), (iv) All-India Adibasi Federation (led by Rev. Joel Lakra, a leader since 1920), (v) Yuvak Dal (Youth Wing of the Catholic Mahasabha), and (vi) Krantikari Morcha (a general platform for the Adibasi youth leaders)

All-India Jharkhand Party (Begun Sumbrui Group)

Membership	23,363	31.12.69
	14,176	31.12.72
	12,025	(1974)
Sphere of influence	:	Singhbhum

Jharkhand Party (N. C. Horo Group)

Membership	6,339	(1972)
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Discussion

on Paper by K Suresh Singh

S C MISHRA/ What and how does one use the word tribal? Is it ethnic or what?

K SURESH SINGH/ Many tribes have been included later in the laws, because they are scheduled. General distinctions can be made, specially on how the Bhil came to be tribals.

R O DHAN/ With reference to legal action, why does not the administration apply these? Whatever is done is voluntarily, and is not followed up.

K SURESH SINGH/ The utilitarian legacy of administration cuts two ways. Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was the most progressive act in 1904. In 1915, this was debated in the legislature, noting that within one year 25,000 alienated people were found within five miles of Chotanagpur. People have to be conscious themselves, before laws can be effective.

B K ROY BURMAN/ Is there unilineal process or oscillation in these movements?

K SURESH SINGH/ Both processes take place. More facts are required, for historically, there is no last word.

N Sanjeevi

Literary and Cultural Background of the D.K. and D.M.K.

‘MORE WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE ON THE RELATION OF LANGUAGE TO THE PURITY-pollution concept, but I find it a fruitful analogy. It is an indigenous system, and thus explains better than any outside analytic framework what attitudes towards language are at work in the Indian linguistic sub-conscious. Since there is evidence that the purity-pollution polarity is stronger in South India, particularly in Tamilnadu, than elsewhere in the sub-continent, it is not surprising to find this kind of language devotion more strongly developed in the Tamil speaking area than elsewhere’. Harold Schiffman.¹

The literary and cultural background of the DK/DMK may be seen in the light of the Aryan and Dravidian conflict, between two different cultural groups that still lingers today in Tamil Nadu. There is a dispute about the original spread of these two cultural groups and scholars present various viewpoints because the earliest evidences are not clearly available to us.² Perhaps, the conflict between the two groups has its roots in pre-history. At any rate, the echo of this enmity—real or otherwise—is found even in our century in the popular slogans of the Dravida Kazaka movement such as, ‘If you see a snake and a Brahman, kill the Brahman first’. Founded on this sentiment of anger and revenge was the cry of Periyar. E. V. R. ‘Dravidanadu for Dravidians (only)’, it is the constitutional achievement of DMK to have led a ministry *without even one brahman minister* from 1967. This paper briefly traces the history of the tradition of disagreement, dissent and protest against the power of the Aryan Brahman with special reference to Tamil Nadu.³

The basic evidence of this conflict is in Sanskrit itself against whose sectarianism and superiority complex all protest arose. Examples of the meanings (among many) of the two words Arya and Dravida, as given in the most authoritative dictionary by Monier Williams, which indicate the conflict, are as follows:

Arya, a loyal or faithful man, a man of one’s own race; one who is faithful

to the deities of his country; name of the Hindu and Iranian people (opposed to *an-arya*, *dasyu*, *dasu*).

Drava, (fr. 2 *dru*) flight, retreat, speed, going quickly; running, flowing; fusing, liquefaction; heat.

Dravaka, causing to run; solvent; captivating; enchanting; cunning; a kind of stone; a loadstone; a thief; a wit; a wag; sharp or clever man; a libertine; a lecher.

Dravana, putting to flight, causing to run or retreat; fusing; an act of causing to fly or retreat; distilling.

Dravayat-sakha, causing a companion to go quickly; carrying a rider quickly away.

Dravyana, putting to flight, causing to run.

Dravayanu, causing to run or to make haste.

Dravita, make to run or fly; put to flight; chased; driven away; melted; liquefied; softened.

Dravya, to be made to run; to be set in motion; to be put to flight; fusible; liquefiable; to be made fluid.

Dravida, Dravidian; belonging to the Dravidas; a Dravida; the Dravida people and their country (properly the coast of Coromandel from Madras to Cape Comorin, or the country in which Tamil is spoken).

Dravinodasa, (Vedic) coming from or belonging to those who present gifts i.e., from sacrificers; relating to Dravindo-das i.e., Agni.

Drah, to wake; to deposit, pledge, put or cast down.

Dru, to hurt, injure, wound or kill; to repent; to go.

Apart from the conflict which may be seen in the words, a correlation of cultural groups to racial stocks has also been mentioned by such scholars as S K Chatterji,⁴ and S C Malik. Again, that there was a combat of superiority-inferiority complex fundamentally based on language and language⁶ use is admitted by scholars like Sukumar Sen who says: 'It was the chaste speech that obtained ambrosia or *Soma* for the gods and it was the unchaste speech that brought defeat to the Asuras in spite of their *seniority* and superiority'.⁷

The above brief background of disagreement, dissent, protest and reform with the Aryan Brahman groups may be seen in the earliest Tamil work; the extant *Tolkappiam*, written by Tolkappiar, (who according to some belongs to Aindira school) gives a strict injunction that the northern (mostly Sanskrit) sounds should not be used as they are but should be Tamilized.⁸ This

injunction seems to have been the watch-word of all Tamil scholars upto fifteenth century when the saint, Arungiri used Sanskrit sounds against Tolkappia's prescriptive rule. The explanation for this may be that Arungiri who is the greatest composer of a peculiar variety of musical songs (*Tirupuhaz*) succumbed at last to the *slow but sure* infiltration of Sanskrit sounds into Tamil especially perhaps due to the Telugu political impact and also due to the license and liberty that the art of popular devotional music sanctions. But Arungiri was probably an exception, since even today the Tamil movement is all for anti-Hindi and anti-Sanskrit agitations, because Tamil has resisted phonological Aryanization while the other Dravidian languages have not.⁹

It is interesting to note that except the world Vedas nowhere in ancient Tamil literature is the word 'Sanskrit' or 'brahman' used. But the content of these words are referred to as 'Vadamozhi' (the northern language), and as 'Anthar' (the beautiful and cool), 'Parpar' (seers') 'Maraiyar' (those who know the secret) i.e., the Vedas. On the other hand, the trend to translate Sanskrit words into pure Tamil words was well-established. Even Kavichakravarthi Kamban who successfully adapted the Valmiki Ramayana at a time when patronage to Sanskrit was at its pinnacle (AD twelfth century), not only refrained from using Sanskrit sounds in strict adherence to Tolkappiar's rule but even translated into pure Tamil Sanskrit proper names (for example Rathactaken into Kuruthikanan) and so on. This indicates that the Tamils must have realized their minority-cultural position, and must have been careful in order to preserve it rather than even protest. As illustration of this point of assimilation-opposition tactics, in the Sangam literature we find the segregated Akragaram of the brahman where even dogs do not dare to enter. In fact, the modern national poet Subramania Bharathi being a brahman himself, denounced the modern brahman of Tamil Nadu for being cunning, corrupt, and cowardly.¹⁰

After the *Tolkappiam*, is the Augustan Age of Sangam literature, where there is also clear evidence of anti-Aryan/Brahman sentiments; the implicit dissent of the *Tolkappiam* developing more as a popular dissent, i.e., the sentiments have grown from a linguistic to a socio-cultural level. It is clear that the whole of Sangam literature is modelled on the grammar of Tamil language, literature, and culture as explained in the traditional grammatical treatise of *Tolkappiam* (c.400 BC). 'A grammarian is normally concerned only with the letters, and syntax. It is indeed unique that Tolkappiar has taken up the study of the subject matter of poetry also in his grammatical treatise'.¹¹ On this point, S K Chatterji says, 'The section on *porul* gives us a vivid and a full analysis of the content of old Tamil poetry; and the milieu (within which the subjective poetry or *Aham* dealing with love, and the objective poetry or *Puram* dealing with warfare) originated is fully discussed. *The basic human qualities are there, but the setting is unique in India, and gives to old Tamil poetry its peculiar and original catchet, its surroundings and atmosphere*'.¹² The significance

of the third book (or part) of *Tolkappiam* which is at once the grammar of language, literature and life is brought out by M. Arunachalam.¹³ 'Of its nine sections *five* deal with *Aham*, one with *Puram*, one each with similies, prosody and idioms. The Tamilian convention of classifying physiographical regions as the four Kurinji, Mullai, Marutham and Neidal and specifying the people who live there, their general pursuits, the seasons and the daily hours which are special to each region, the emotion of love that is most applicable to each region, the natural setting, animals and birds and the tutelary deities —starts from *Tolkappiam*'.

Thus, the others are (1) a large portion of love poems in Sangam literature, and (2) that the antiquity of the Tamil tradition of grammar which deals with language, literature and culture because of an integrated view of life. This itself is a fundamental point of difference between the Tamil and Sanskrit genius (at least in writing the grammar). Moreover, the most important difference between the love-life of the Aryans and Dravidians (Tamilians) is that of the *Gandarva* and *Karpū* types in which the former permits a sort of free-love or love of convenience whereas the latter does not at any cost. In fact, in ancient Tamil culture, the word Tamil is identical with pre-marital and post-marital love-life of chastity. As an illustration of this we have a poem 'Kurincipatta' (Song of the Mountain) by a brahman poet of the Sangam age who is considered the greatest and noblest of all poets, wherein the chaste premarital love-life that leads to married life is depicted. And the importance of this poem is that its colophon declares that 'it was sung to *teach* the Arya King Brahathathan what *Tamil* (love-culture) is'. Again, in the twin classification, all non-love themes inclusive of those on god are under *Puram*. A typical illustration of a *Puram* poem is the one in which a poet declares that his pattern *Āy* is not one who trades in the business of ethics, religion, and philosophy by doing something good in this birth to bargain for something also in the next birth, but does good just because that is the way of the great (who were his forebears). This idea/ideal is enough to enlighten us on the beginnings of a disagreement/dissent against the Aryan or the Hindu idea of *Karma* or *Punnyam* and its established nature. In short, the ethics, religion and philosophy of ancient Tamils were more secular and humanistic than sectarian and sacred. However, we must note that the idea of superiority and inferiority including that of the four-fold caste system did creep into Tamil society with the knowledge and support of the Tamil rulers, even of the pre-Christian Sangam age. Even in the classical age the brahman wielded astonishing political influence besides being loyal priests. There were, of course, significant but not very loud voices which arose in protest against the entry into the establishment of brahminical ideas, and can be convincingly perceived in the general social and cultural life of the Tamil region.

The Sangam age crumbled mainly because of the individualistic social character that was aggravated by the evil-designs of the Aryan Brahmins, supported by the Tamil kings. This is what blunts the force of all dissent.

protest and reform movements although the subtler forms of these made by generations of Tamil genius continued. This is why today there is a strong non-brahman government, based particularly on the strength of the anti-Hindi agitation which is essentially an anti-Sanskrit, anti-Aryan and anti-brahman upheaval.¹⁴ This view is supported by S K Chatterjee¹⁵ and Harold Schiffman¹⁶ who have written about the significance of Sangam literature, its originality and its impact.

After the Sangam literature it is the Veda of the Tamils—the *Thirukkural*—in which we are able to discern in a much more clear and crisp manner the tradition of disagreement, dissent, protest and reform in ancient India. Here is protest not only against Aryan/Sanskrit ideals but against some unhealthy aspects of the writer's own Tamil civilization and culture, viz., the evils of meat-eating, drink, gambling, and prostitution which had a *very honoured* place in Tamil society. The following are some examples of couplets from the

Thirukkural :

“Of what use is learning if one *worships* not the feet of Him who has true wisdom?¹⁷... They are the Brahmans who are righteous and love *all* creations.... To be pure in mind is *all Dharma* (Aram). *All else is but pomp*.... *Waking up she worships no other god than her husband*; *verily at her bidding it rains*.... Of what use is a *guard-house*? Self-control is the best guard (for a woman)¹⁸.... Hospitality is a sacred *yajna* for whose value there is no fit measure but the worth of the guest¹⁹.... *The Vedas*, if forgotten, may be learnt again; (but) the Brahman has his fall when he lapses from his conduct inherited *by birth*.... Far better than a thousand (Vedic) *sacrificer* rich in oblations is abstention from the flesh of an animal that is killed.... To endure the ills of life and to restrain from causing pain to living beings—*this itself is* a form of penance²⁰.... The ascetic *appearance* of one who has no strength of will, is like that of an ox grazing in the guise of a tiger.... Committing evil *under the mask of holiness* is like the hunter lying in wait for birds.... To share one's bread and to protect many lives: this is at the head of all the compilations of scholars.²¹... The king who is bereft of the help of the men who will *condemn* his injustice acts unwisely will perish even though he has no enemies²².... It is *not the spear* that wins, but the sceptre; and that too when it is not deflected.... Are not the *tears shed by the suffering* and the desperate weapons that destroy the wealth of the beings? ²³... They that have a dauntless spirit and relax not their efforts—*they will see fate behind them*.... Though he sees *his mother starving*, let him not do those actions which are condemned by the great²⁴.... *Let the creator perish* wandering about if he has ordained begging, too, as a means of existence²⁵.... Of what are the means capable? Of *selling* themselves at once (even) at the approach of adversity”²⁶ (Italics ours).

It must be mentioned here in all fairness that if Thiruvalluvar did criticize Aryan ideas in a highly cultured and constructive manner in a *few couplets*, he also took up cudjels against his own through *four chapters* of ten couplets

each. Further, while we find the quality of politeness, which may be considered as the highest hallmark of human culture, manifest in all his criticism against alien ideas, we see him using all rhetoric including that of ridicule and rebuke, satire and sermon for expressing his disagreement and protest against those who deserved it in his own cultural group. He himself has said: 'Slander not behind the back, speak *bitterly* to the face as you may.... Will ever harm befall one who looks upon the fault of others *as one's own*?'

The twin epics (AD c. 200) that succeed Tiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*, *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* present the beginnings of the propaganda type of literature of disagreement, dissent and protest. The author of *Silappadikaram*, a royal monk of the ancient Chera (modern Kerala) country, is far less fanatic than his contemporary, a businessman-poet, with regard to some aspects of the content of these two epics. The outlines of these two stories are in themselves clear and courageous expressions of political, economic and social protest against contemporary life. It is indeed difficult to imagine that it was given to two women of Tamil society to protest and fight their way to salvation in the second century AD, unless one has carefully read these. Kannaki, the heroine of *Silappadikaram*, cries out in the streets of Madurai protesting against the injustice in the killing of her innocent husband, argues with the king in the royal court and proves her case, and causes the instant death of the misguided but otherwise innocent king. In the case of *Manimekalai*, the daughter of Kavolan, the husband of Kannaki, though a rich-concubine, who has met a Buddhist nun at a very young age, is a poem more in protest against the demeaning system of harlotry. Here, we find a socially aware worker telling the world that it is food that is the most essential thing for life, and *Dharma* is nothing but giving food, cloth, shelter to all. We also see her courting imprisonment and enduring all torture inflicted by the king. Thus, it is these two epics that for the first time gave explicit expression to protest against political injustice, poverty and social suffering.

The *bhakti* movements of Saivism and Vaishnavism in Tamil Nadu come from AD 700 down to the present day. This was primarily possible because of the *pādy-pāthras* of Saiva Nayaunnars and Vaishnava Alwars who went from place to place, performed miracles, and attributed all their powers to the God presiding in the temples in different places which they signified by their hymns. It is certain that in this the Nayunnars had an edge over the Alwars. This is clearly evidenced by the large number of Saiva temples that are built in Tamil Nadu and the vast amount of Saiva literature that we have. But it may appear intriguing that Siva whose name is not mentioned in the *Tolkappiam*, the earliest Tamil work extant (pointing an antiquity greater than Sangam classics also) is worshipped by so many more than Thirumal or Vishnu who is clearly mentioned in the *Tolkappiam* itself. The answer lies in the split that occurred in the Vaishnava *bhakti* movement, when a different kind of protest within a group itself (namely the Vadakali and Tankalai movement), came into existence and continues even today.

After the *bhakti* movement it was the Siddha movement and some scholars are of the opinion that it came from the North—most likely from Kashmir²⁷. If this is true it is interesting to note that this protest movement came from the North. The protest of the Siddha movement starting from the tenth century (the first important work being Tirumular's *Tirumanthiram*) was against the excesses of the *bhakti* movement in not only sacrificing norms of every day ethical life as depicted in the *Pariyapuranam* but the waste it caused to people in terms of precious time and energy. So they wanted to help interested people attain eternal bliss by yogic methods. Because these methods gave all astonishing *siddhis*, the school itself was named after that.

In the line of Tirumular the last great person perhaps was Tayumanavar (AD 1700) whose poems are known for simplicity and clarity, marks the beginnings of religious universalism and humanism as literary and cultural movements in Tamil Nadu. This was partly due to the impact of Islam and Christianity on Tamil heritage. Particularly, perhaps, this was due to the debates that were going on between the Catholics and the Protestants themselves, and those between the Christians and the Hindus. The infiltration of Islam was deep, fearful and damaging. Practically all Muslims of Tamil Nadu, due to historical reasons, insist on certain rights of worship over sacred hill-tops, and in temple-tanks. This has caused on many occasions Hindu-Muslim riots. Due to all these factors of movements compromise rather than conflict have arisen to help for the new spirit of humanism and universal religion. Interestingly enough, the two great supporters of this are Ramalingaswami, a great Hindu saint-poet, and Munsiff Vedanayakam Pillai, a Catholic who is our first novelist also.

The modern period literally starts with the great spiritualist Ramalingaswami, which was essentially a protest against Brahmanism. He built a temple of his own in which there was only a worship of light at Vadalur (South Arcot District) near Chidambaram, where the most sacred Siva temple for all Saivas ever since the seventh century, (atleast since the *bhakti* movement started in full swing) exists. This provoked the Dikhatars (a special group of brahmins who are held in high esteem next only to lord Siva by Saiva saints themselves) and it is even feared that that may have been the cause of the sudden end of Ramalingaswami whose death is still shrouded in mystery.

After Ramalinga, broadly speaking, it is all our own contemporary times, in which we have only two great poets: the national poet Subramania Bharathi, and the anti-national Dravidian poet Bharathidasan. The name of the latter itself will suggest that he was the disciple of the former. But in spite of all his devotion to his guru, he is the poet-laureate of the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu. In his poems we find even vulgar and violent attacks on nationalism and Brahminism. These two were treated as identical by some for certain justifiable reasons and thus was the root cause for the birth of the Justice Party which when it became more militant acquired the name of Dravida Kazakam. It is only fair with reference to contemporary history to

mention here the name of P. Sundram Pillai author of *Manonmaaniyam* the only classical Tamil drama in verse in the twentieth century, who was also Professor of Philosophy in Trivandram University; and M. S. Puranalingam Pillai, a Professor of English, who wrote the first *History of Tamil literature* in English and also such books as *Critical Studies in Kural*, *Tamil India* and *Ravana the Great*. Coming to the very end of the paper suffice to say that it was partially the protest against reasonless rigor of the individual personality of Periyar E.V.R., and his fanatical attitude, that certain realities stood for all reason in public life and who is really the father of the post-Independent Tamil Nadu that the DMK was born.

Finally, a note on the forms of protest as revealed by Tamil literature is relevant and essential. (1) In Sangam love poetry it was apart from scolding and beating that ordinarily took place between the parents and girls, the special kind of protest that a young man would present against a girl and her parents who do not consent to have matrimonial connections with him is to ride on a house-like thing made of Palyamara thorns with a drawing of the girl whom he loves signifying thereby that he will commit suicide if his proposal is not accepted. (2) In non-love poetry among the poets and kings, it was the poets or intelligentsia of whom the rulers were literally afraid because their character, impartiality and integrity represented the greatest point of Tamil culture, and now alas! the form of protest was avoidance of speaking and embracing. (3) It is also interesting to note that when the poets received even rich presents like an elephant in a disparaging manner either they refused or they left them tying them around the king's guard-tree itself. (4) More intense form of protest or self-punishment was that of fasting unto death sitting facing north which was known as 'vadakkiruthal' just because the north was considered as 'punnya Disai' as mentioned in *Silapadikaram*. (5) In the classical age when someone wanted to protest or challenge against a king he would either cut away the doll and ball that the king used to tie around his guard-post which was a guard-tree or cut down the tree itself. (6) Through *Silapadikaram* we can infer that setting fire must have become a form of protest in civil matters; also which might have been till then only available in military mechanics. (7) In the medieval and modern period the form of protests are of more impolite nature in the non-verbal love; particular mention may be made of the role of stones, chappals and broom-sticks, of these the first one might have had some link with the 'Kavan' in early warfare. And, the second and third one are used in social and political affairs. It is rather interesting to note that there were chappals—messenger poems—against Rajaji and others who compulsorily introduced Hindi in Tamil Nadu.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Studies in the Language and Culture of South Asia*, edited by Edrin Gerow and Margery D Lery, 1973. Seattle and London, University of Washington Press.
2. For an exhaustive bibliography see N. Lahovary, *Dravidian Origins and the West*, 1963.

3. *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*, S. K. Chatterji, for further references.
4. S. K. Chatterji in his article in the Govt. of India's publication "Affinity and Indian Languages" (1959).
5. S. C. Malik, *Indian Civilization : The Formative Period*, 1968, Simla, IIAS, pp. 106, 132.
6. For other expositions on this problem one can refer to journals like *Tamilian Antiquary* & *Tamil Culture*. Also (a) Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages*, 1875; 1913, (b) Gilbert Slater's—*The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture*, 1924, and *History of Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A. D.*, 1929, (c) V. R. Ramchandra's—*Dikshitar—Origin and Spread of the Tamils*, 1947; and (d) G. Devanathan's *The Language Problem of Tamil Nad and its Logical Solution*.
7. Sukumar Sen; *History & Pre-History of Sanskrit*, 1958.
8. *Tolkappiam, Soldadhikaram*, 9 : 5.
9. *Studies in the Language and Culture of South Asia*, op. cit. p. 130.
10. Bharathi's poem, 'Maravan Paataw'
11. M. Arunachalam, *An Introduction to Tamil Literature*, pp. 32-3.
12. S. K. Chatterji, *Language & Literatures of Modern India*, p. 310.
13. Arunachalam, op. cit., p. 31.
14. See R. L. Hardgrove, *The Dravidian Movement*, 1965, and P. S. Pratt, *D. M. K. in Power*, 1970.
15. S. K. Chatterji, op. cit., pp. 306, 311.
16. *Studies in the Languages & Culture of South Asia*, op. cit. p. 127.
17. The deep significance of this couplet being the second one in the very first chapter on Tirukkural on God, among other things, clearly indicates that the seeds for the *bhakti* movement were already shown.
18. Tiruvalluvar's implicit dissent in this couplet explains how liberal and sensitive he was to the freedom of women even in an age when there was more freedom than in later times.
19. The significance of Tiruvalluvar using the Tamil word 'velvi' for yajna and equating it to such a mundane, secular thing is to be noted. This is his diplomatic technique of 'brain-washing'. Also note Tiruvalluvar saying 'is all' and 'just this is' in couplets 34 and 261. He also condemns Vedic sacrifice directly, vide 259.
20. It is very important to note that this is the first couplet in the chapter on penance. It is really heartening to note the incisive insight of A. L. Basham in understanding the significance of these couplets. In *The Wonder that was India* he writes (p. 339) : "All Hindu texts teach mercy, compassion and friendliness, but positive benevolence, except in the form of alms giving is less prominent though often among lists of virtues we find "desire for the welfare of all beings". A positive ethic of love and forgiveness is a feature of much Tamil Sacred literature." For this we can have any number of evidences, vide particularly 30, 259.
21. It is imperative to note that this couplet occurs in the chapter of 'Abstinence from Killing'.
22. As told elsewhere in this paper the greatest of all Sangam traditions was to respect the poets who were the intelligentsia who never feared to give open advice not only on matters of polity but on personal life also. And the evidence for the strength of this tradition is found in Sangam poetic conventions, e. g. strong advise poems.
23. After *Silappadikaram* is said to be the best illustration for this couplet.
24. This is a very important couplet in the sense that it is in the commentary to this *Parimelazakar*, the classical commentator who was very well versed in Sanskrit and who is charged by generations of Tamil scholarship that as a Vaishnava brahman his interpretations are corrupted by pro-Aryan/Sanskrit ideas/ideals comes out courageously pointing his finger saying this is the aspect of morality in which the Dravidian culture is different and wins over Aryan ideas/ideals.
25. This is the couplet that is the spear-head of all anti-god and anti-capitalist movements in Tamilnad in the last fifty years.
26. The significance of the second book of Tiruvalluvar, 'the universal bard' is thought-provoking.
27. Basham, A. L. op. cit., pp. 334-335.

Discussion

On Paper By N Sanjeevi

K SURESH SINGH/ We are aware of the weaknesses of the early ethnographers, because the process of Hinduization was misrepresented. Cooperation and collaboration both processes have been taking place. Sanjeevi is playing up political issues of today, which is not being objective. Many processes have been going on through history, and sociological studies need to be made.

S R MEHROTRA/ Has the D M K played some constructive role in the development of Tamil culture and literature? Have the Tamils done as much for their language, as in Maharashtra and Bengal ?

N SANJEEVI/ D M K could not do as much for Tamil literature as the Congress Party has done in this regard.

S R MEHROTRA/ Is the anti-Hindi agitation healing the brahman and non-brahman rift ? Why is purity, pollution, etc. so prominent in South India? Is the attachment to language so strong for brahmans and non-brahmans, to create a conflict? I think, Sanjeevi is seeing too much in the history of anti-Sanskrit and anti-Aryan elements in Tamil culture, because the interaction between the two has been equally very strong.

C PARVATHAMMA/ How does one explain the continued rigidity and orthodoxy of the South, and comparative flexibility in the North ? This may be because the North has been open to more external influence and conquest, than is the case with the South. The anti-Hindi feeling is a fear of domination of North, even today. Therefore, this is necessary if they have to retain their regional identity.

S C MALIK/ The references and quotations of several authors with regard to racial and linguistic classifications needs revision. The culture-contact

situations of "Aryan-Dravidians" was of equal nature rather than of a superiorinferior situation that 19th century scholars have put forward. Sanjeevi's surmises require drastic revision.

T K OOMMEN/ On the question of domination, it is a question of centre-periphery relations. There is no core in India, there are parallel streams; that we must think of multiple centrality and multiple dissenters. This is a possible method of research of problems.

DEVAHUTI/ Historically contact between North and South has been always there. For instance, in art there has been more acceptance in the North and in the political field, the Southern kings reached north (*Uttar Path*) the base of the Himalayas in military excursions as often as the Northern kings reached the deep South (*Dakshina Path*) and who put the expression of their own on the shores of the Himalayas. Similarly, in the field of language and literature Dravidian (specially Tamil) influenced Sanskrit (including Rig-Veda) to a considerable extent (ref. Borough, Emmaneau, etc.). The same can be said in the field of religion, architecture, and so on.

K SURESH SINGH/ The work of Nilkanta Shastri has made very good contribution regarding the absence of Aryan-Dravidian conflict, as Malik has also suggested, for economic powers was often found in the South.

LEELA DUBE/ Cooperation has been overemphasized and conflict underplayed. But the latter may have been misused for political reasons. Tamil literature is indeed very old. The brahmans there came from indigenous sources and priesthood has always been strong. In other areas of India also there is anti-brahman feeling, but there has been no clear-cut hierarchy as in the South.

PRATAP CHANDRA/ Two points should be noted: (1) It is fallacious to use language as sole indicator of race or of Indo-Aryan languages, for the Dravidian-Aryan conflict. (2) Religious persecution has not repudiated ideological plurality, and many great ideas of Indian thought have come from the South. Even ideas reflected in North India have come from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Y M PATHAN/ Some questions: (1) Was the first translation in Tamil of Ramayana faithful to the original Ramayana, or whether it had excluded certain portions which were not acceptable to the Tamil people?

(2) Please explain briefly the *Aham* and *Puram* literature; and which of them helped to arouse the feeling of dissent and protest?

(3) Whether brahmans figure in the present Tamil literature? If so, how are they depicted?

(4) Are Sanskrit words used in the Tamil language of the present day? Is the use of these words specifically omitted in Tamil language?

(5) Whether there are any religious sects or *sampradayas* which advocate the cause of dissent and protest ?

(6) Whether at present, Hindi words are translated in Tamil ? Is there any tendency to avoid contact with the literature of other Indo-Aryan languages ?

RAVINDER KUMAR/ With reference to North-South or brahman-non-brahman category, apart from the frontier society concept of North India as presented, there may be other reasons; say, the linguistic family-kinship societies. Because of this, therefore, is society in North India more open than in the South? Does conservatism come in because of this ?

N SANJEEVI/ The brahman non-brahman culture-social fusion will never take place as long as the present politico-socio-economic democratic set-up continues. The apparent joining hands of brahmans and non-brahmans during the time of the anti-Hindi agitation was a passing phase only. For instance, this can be seen by the earlier support given by Rajaji to D M K, and later his bitter opposition again.

Whether some anthropologists or historians agree or not about the classification of conflict of Aryan, and Dravidian or not the pre-Aryan-Dravidian antiquity is accepted on all hands. What was attempted to give the antiquity that is seen in the literary and cultural background of the DK/DMK.

Along with micro and macro studies, comparative studies also must be taken up which will strengthen the cause of integration and progress.

K M George

Protest Voices of Creative Writers of Kerala

IN A WORLD OF UNJUSTIFIABLE INEQUALITIES, DISTRESS AND SUFFERING, THE MORE enlightened a person is, the more dissatisfied he will be, because he will be naturally concerned with the well-being of the human society around him. And outstanding writers, as the cream of enlightened people, have always expressed their concern for fellow-men in their writings, either directly or indirectly. This takes the form of dissent and protest, leading to revolt and reform. As far as creative writers are concerned, the expression of protest and dissatisfaction is, by and large, indirect. They portray in their poems, stories or plays the defeat and crumbling of the existing order and the creation of a new order according to their vision.

And this is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening down the ages. The function of literature is to review the past, reflect and reconstruct the present, and mould the future; and this is to be done by words with an emotional and intellectual content. *The creative writer lives partly in the present and partly in the future.* He cannot be a prisoner of his own times. The emotional force of his revolutionary vision considerably influences the readers, some of whom may translate the dream into reality. The powerful writings of men of letters have a significant place in the growth of a civilization.

In Kerala, the part played by select creative writers in certain reform movements has been considerable down the ages. But this paper is limited to examining this during the last hundred years or so, especially when writers in Malayalam have voiced their protest and dissatisfaction. However, there seems to be a difference in the last four decades from the period before that. Culturally, Kerala is very much like other regions of India, (though it has its special features and particular emphasis), with similar traditions and forces shaping attitudes towards life. Here, protests and revolutionary appeal assume a different form from the mid-thirties of this century, in the sense that they have a collective or group-basis. The writers wrote as individuals, but they had a common goal as members of a well-knit group such as the society of progressive

writers (*Purogamana Sahitya Sanghatana*). While Marxism and the Russian Revolution of 1917 have influenced the major writers all over the world in the last half of a century, this influence reached the writers in India perceptibly only in the thirties. And the writers in Kerala did not lag behind. To this new wave of protest we shall come to a little later.

The writers and intellectuals before this period, no doubt, exchanged ideas and influenced one another, but there were no formal or organized groups. This was during the period immediately before and after the turn of the century, when social and political awareness was low and readership limited. A clientele had to be created by the power of individual writers and the quality of their output. This was done by a few outstanding writers whose voices reverberated throughout the length and breadth of Kerala for a long time.

Human society is divided into various segments with reference to race, caste, social, and economic status, as well as educational and cultural attainments. In these segments, the gradations of superiority and inferiority are also recognized, and mobility from one level to a higher one is impossible in some cases and difficult in others. One of the most disheartening features of Indian civilization is the caste hierarchy. When Vivekananda visited Kerala in 1892, he was so stunned that he referred to it as a veritable 'lunatic asylum'. Not only untouchability, but 'unseeability' persisted there. The Nambudiri (Kerala brahman) was at the top of the ladder and the system accommodated several castes and subcastes. Even among brahmans, there was a gradation. The Embrans or brahmans who migrated from Tulu Nadu had the second place, and the Pattars or the brahmans who came from Tamil Nadu had a still lower place. Then came the kshatriyas and temple servants after whom came the Nairs. Now, the Nair community in Kerala (Menon and Pillai are titles used by the same community) are a powerful group with a military tradition and they are not to be completely identified with shudras. There are also backward communities, the most important being the *Ezhava* (*Tiyya*). The sub-groups coming under the general name Harijans are numerous. The rights and privileges enjoyed by the upper castes, and the indignities and disabilities suffered by the lower castes are now a matter of history. Considerable change has come about in the last few decades, and in this the writers played a significant part.

CHANDU MENON

A realistic picture of the life in Kerala, particularly of the life lived by the Nair and Nambudiri communities in the nineteenth century can be obtained from the well-known novel *Indulekha*, written by Chandu Menon in 1889. Chandu Menon was a judge by profession, and this novel, which was his first book, was an experiment to produce something in his own language after the fashion of the English novels, so that his spouse and friends who had no knowledge of English could get a taste of that branch of literature. The result was a great

success. Chandu Menon chose a familiar scene and wrote in a simple, 'homely' language. In this story a large matriarchal Nair joint family showing signs of stagnation comes to life with astonishing vividness.

One of the vibrant characters is the seventy year old Panchu Menon, the *Karanavar* or the presiding authority of the *Taravad*. He had to deal with several members of the family, including sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, as well as their progeny. The core of the novel is a simple love story; a love episode between Madhavan (son of a niece of Panchu Menon) and Indulekha (grand daughter of Panchu Menon). The high-spirited Madhavan who had just finished his college education argues with the *Karanavar* regarding his younger cousin's education. The simple-hearted, but autocratic Panchu Menon feels considerably irritated at Madhavan's behaviour. He believes that English education will only spoil young men and make them disobedient, as it has done in Madhavan's case. He therefore, swears that Indulekha will not be given in marriage to him. The course of love does not run smooth. Panchu Menon plans to bring in a rich suitor, Suri Nambudiripad to marry Indulekha and this has the sanction of the prevailing custom. This influential Nambudiri was a licentious, profligate and unsteady person. In the Nambudiri community, only the eldest male member was allowed to marry within the community, the others were to marry from lower communities and this relationship called *sambandham* meant very little responsibility, except that of giving company in the bedroom. In those days, Nair families considered it a prestige and privilege to give their women in marriage to Nambudiris. But the system had degenerated and the women folk were considered mere playthings. Chandu Menon wanted to challenge this Nambudiri domination and Nair submission and *Indulekha* is a magnificent and eloquent but veiled protest against this state of things.

Though many characters live and move and have their being in the novel, the most attractive and vital character is the heroine Indulekha herself. She is a well-accomplished young lady by any standards. She had a good grounding in Sanskrit and English—had training not only in the *Veena*, but also in the violin and the piano. She is very intelligent, independent and quite assertive. When Suri Nambudiri approaches her as a highly sexy, flamboyant coxcomb, he gets completely knocked out by Indulekha's scorn and smart retorts. She overpowers Panchu Menon too by her frank and logical conversation and independent spirit. In *Indulekha*, the heroine, the novelist has given us a picture of the ideal Kerala woman of the future.

This great novel is the expression of a protest, and revolt of a rising generation against a dying one. Chandu Menon is a rebel against illiteracy amongst Indian women and he strongly advocates a good education in English. He feels that only a good education can develop the individuality of a person and give him a good bearing. He places the highest premium on personal freedom; freedom to think and speak without inhibitions, *freedom to choose the partner in life without succumbing to conventions and traditions brought about by selfish people who*

happened to be on the higher rungs of caste hierarchy. In brief, *Indulekha* is a calculated, emphatic and long-enduring protest against victimization of various kinds, whether it be from despotic and overbearing uncles, or from profligate but powerful high caste sex-adventurists. The author's great sympathy for the exploited is absolutely clear.

KUMARAN ASAN

The expression of protest and eagerness for social reform reached its zenith in the poems of Kumaran Asan, one of the great trio of modern Malayalam poetry. Asan, born in the backward community of *Ezhavas* in 1873 was not only a great poet, but an outstanding organizer as well. *Ezhavas* of Kerala are a fast progressing community and they form nearly 27 per cent of the population. Even now they are considered politically backward, but their backwardness a century ago has no comparison. They suffered several disabilities—social, economic and educational. They were not admitted to schools and had no access to certain roads near temples. The higher castes monopolized government service and the *Ezhavas* had to satisfy themselves with their traditional occupations like toddy tapping, weaving and farming. There were, no doubt, other communities which suffered even greater humiliation. But the leaders of the *Ezhava* community were more conscious of the oppression and injustice. From among them there dawned on the horizon a great liberator and spiritual leader Narayana Guru (1856-1928). His mission was not only spiritual, but educational and social; and he championed the cause of not only *Ezhavas* but all communities who suffered disabilities of various kinds. Apart from his deep spiritual experience, Narayana Guru had a poetic heart and a gift for epigrammatic expression. Among many such expressions, the one which gained the widest appeal is this: 'One Caste, one Religion and one God for man'. It is a protest in epigrammatic form against the prevailing distinctions in religion and caste. When Narayana Guru was questioned as to what right he had to consecrate the idol of Shiva in a temple, he retorted that he was consecrating only an '*Ezhava* Shiva'. In one temple he put up a mirror in place of the idol to teach an important lesson to the worshippers. His main mission was that the backward classes should not be indifferent to religion as they had no access to the Hindu temples of the orthodox type. At the age of 18, Kumaran met the Guru and at once he came under his spell, something akin to Narendranath meeting Sri Ramakrishna. This association was not only mutually beneficial, but beneficial to the people of Kerala at large.

Narayana Guru arranged for Kumaran's further education for which he had to be in Bangalore and Calcutta. After his five years sojourn, Kumaran came back to his Guru as a mature scholar with a spiritual bias. Asan organized the SNDP Yogam (1903), a society formed to propagate the ideals of Narayana Guru, and was its general secretary for 17 years. He edited a magazine

entitled *Vivekodayam* and wrote several works in prose and verse. At the height of his creative power, the cruel hand of Fate removed Asan from the world. He was only 51, when he was drowned. Asan is acknowledged as one of the greatest poets of the modern era. He has written several poems, but what is significant is that every poem focuses on the weaker sex and upholds the cause of the less privileged. It was Asan's lot to spearhead the 'renaissance' in Malayalam literature. And the strongest voice of social protest is heard from him.

As could be very well imagined, the injustice perpetuated in the name of caste was tormenting the awakened mind of Asan. He gives expression to this feeling in his poetic compositions. Even as early as 1908, we see this in his short poem *Oru Tiyyakuttiyaute Vicharam* (The Thoughts of a *Tiyya* Child). A few lines from the poem are reproduced below:

*Let these people remain unlettered in the future / Let them lose jobs and lose their strength :
With these intentions, some pitiless ones / Obstruct our schools and our hostels too.*

*Why shouldst thou wail then, O Bharat ? / Thy slavery is thy destiny, O Mother !
Thy sons blinded by caste, clash among themselves / And get killed ; what for is freedom then ?*

The voice becomes stronger in his *Simhanadam* (The Lion's Roar-1919), where he says:

*Arise, arise, my brothers all, who with spiritual strength and love /
are richly blessed : Speed up where /
the Caste-demon rears its ugly face ! / Sound the drums of battle and charge /
the foe wherever be his stand.*

But in another four years he embodies his reaction towards caste in two major poems *Duravastha* (The Tragic state) and *Chandalabhikshuki*. These are poems of social concern, poems which engender revolt and revolution, poems which no other person could have written with such force and conviction.

Here is the story of *Duravastha* in brief. During the Hindu-Muslim riot of Malabar in 1921, several families were uprooted. Savitri, a Nambudiri lady who lost her kith and kin was obliged to flee for life. She happens to take refuge in the hut of Chathan, a person of the Pulaya caste. The young man gives her protection. As she cannot get away, they live together in the same hut. In due course mutual sympathy turns into interest which later develops into intimacy. Finally, they decide to be man and wife. Bringing together in matrimony the Nambudiri and the Pulaya, the highest and the lowest in the caste hierarchy is what the poet has done. Here Chathan and Savitri act as man and woman shorn of all artificialities produced by caste conventions.

The poem contains arguments, exhortations and indictments; now and then passion and anxiety outweigh the poetic art.

*The same indeed the Hand that cast ! the Brahman and the Harijan ; / and what
a range of glorious deeds of valour, love and intellect, / hast thou thwarted from
fruition / O Hindu faith, because of Caste !*

*And how many of the finest men/ the Sankaras, the Perumals / and bards—the
Thunchans and Kurchans / who, in thy womb, aborted lie, / alas ! my mother
Kerala / because of Caste's blood-thirsty ways!*

*And there do lie, Mother Bharat, / six to seven crore gems in thee, which burnished,
would priceless be, / and lustrous, but now cast away !*

Addressing the votaries of the Hindu *Shastras*, the poet warns:

*Change ye the laws yourselves, or else,
The laws will change you indeed.*

This couplet has been inscribed on the tablet beneath the statue of Kumaran Asan recently erected at Trivandrum opposite to the Legislators Hostel, perhaps as an admonition, to those who are to frame laws in the present day.

Chandalabhikshuki is practically a sequel to *Duravastha*. The story is taken from the Buddhist lore. The thirsty Ananda, one of the Buddha's disciples, comes to the shade of a large banyan tree and asks Matangi, a Chandala woman for a drink of water. She doubts whether he could accept water from her, she being a member of a low-caste. And the Bhikshu drinks it with relish. This unexpected contact plants a new feeling in Matangi's mind. After a sleepless night, she goes to the Buddhavihara in the morning, and realizing the quality of her love the Buddha accepts her as a disciple. This annoys the members of the higher castes, who go to the king to voice their protest. The king himself visits the vihara to have a word with the Buddha who convinces him about the foolishness of the caste system.

Asan makes use of the material in this old story to carve out a fine poem. The focal point of the poem is the discussion on caste between the king and the Buddha. Here are some of the words which the poet has put into the mouth of the Buddha:

*Tell me / Does the Brahman come / from the tip of a creeper / or from a cloud ?
/ Or does he emanate / like the sacrificial fire made without another fire ? / Is caste
found in the blood / Or is it in the bone or the marrow ? / Is the Chandala woman's
body / infertile to the Brahman seed ? / Is the sacred thread / or the tuft of hair or the
mark on the forehead / an adjunct of birth ? / Does the Brahman get his learning /
without being tutored ?*

What powerful questions ! And what sound logic ! Matangi reached a realm where caste had no meaning and she realized what true love was. These two poems reveal the intensity of Asan's feeling and the fullness of his involvement in social reconstruction.

VALLATHOL

Poets other than Asan also felt strongly about the injustice and inhumanity perpetrated by caste. Some of them have raised their voices of protest through moving poems. Vallathol Narayana Menon, who is perhaps better known outside Kerala, is one of them. Born in 1878, he lived a full life and died when he was seventy-nine. The quantity and quality of his writings, as well as the range of the subjects chosen, make him an outstanding figure in modern Malayalam literature. He was a poet of the people and without him the nationalism of Kerala would have been less expressive and less energetic. He has written quite a few poems voicing his strong protest against the foreign yoke. On the subject of caste also Vallathol has written with commendable indignation.

His *Papamochanam* (Liberation from Sin) is based on the Vaikom Satyagraha movement undertaken to get the temple road open to the Harijans. The poet sees the role of the Satyagrahis as follows:

*Tasting the holy water
That is the sweat on the brow
Of these crusaders for dharma
Emerge my country from the horrible sin
Of man driving off man.*

Here is another short poem which Vallathol has written to ridicule the absurdity of casteism. In *Sudharil Sudhan* (Simpleton of Simpletons), he describes the scene of a Nair's house catching fire one night. While the flames leap up, the inmates rush out. On seeing the fire, a group of outcastes rush up to the scene and some of them approach the well to draw water. But the master of the house, the upper caste Nair, stops them in an angry mood:

*Let my house turn into ashes if it will
But don't come beyond your bounds
And pollute my well.*

The poet comments:

*Oh Nair, you are a simpleton of simpletons
What does it matter if your house is burnt down.
You have saved your priceless caste.*

This is a protest in the garb of a strong ridicule. Vallathol is also capable of using a double-edged satire. For instance, when he writes about the Hindu-Muslim riots, he has a question for both communities.

To the Hindu, he puts the question:

*Are you happy when you commit human slaughter
to prevent cow slaughter ?*

The question to the Muslim is as follows:

*If Allah who is the perfection of music
Objects to songs and the music of instruments
Will the oceans of the world be sounding their drums ?
Will the cuckoo be singing its songs ?*

Vallathol has a number of poems expressing deep sympathy for the lowly and the suffering. He had a genuine concern for the depressed classes and the labourers. Even before the advent of socialist thought into Kerala's life, as a true follower of Gandhiji, Vallathol lifted himself above class and caste and made his nationalism sufficiently wide and cosmopolitan.

There were also protests against these protests, voiced particularly by some members of the higher castes. For instance, Chandu Menon was attacked on the ground that *Indulekha* was a calculated insult to the Nambudiri community. Asan was severely criticised that the two poems had little poetry in them and that the story of *Duravasthi* was most unrealistic and absurd. But these protests died out in due course and the creative works became more and more popular.

As mentioned earlier, Malayalam literature took a new turn in the thirties of this century. There was a general feeling that to be progressive literature should leave its catering to the leisured class and take up the cause of the have-nots and the downtrodden. This idea quickly gained ground and found expression in the poems, stories and plays written particularly by the younger generation. A movement of progressive literature was started in 1937. This provided an opening for writers with progressive views to exchange ideas and an opportunity to know more about what was happening in European literatures. This movement played an important role for about fifteen years after which it developed dissensions and lost its hold on the people. In the so-called 'progressive writing', economic and political aspects were kept in focus. Creative writers got inspired by new ideologies. In their writings, they voiced strong protests against the existing social order, encouraged a revolutionary attitude, and created a climate for social change. Examples of significant writing are too numerous to mention.

Among the poets who contributed to social change, the names of Sankara Kurup, Changampuzha, N V Krishna Warriar, Vayalar Rama Varma, P Bhaskaran, and O N V Kurup may be mentioned. Those in the field of fiction are very many. Keshava Dev, Thakazhi, Ponkunnam Varki, Mohammiad Basheer, S K Pottekkad, Karoor, P C Kuttikrishnan, Nagavalli RS Kurup and Vettoor Raman Nair are the names of people who had established themselves earlier in the field. In the realm of drama we have K Damodaran, K Ramakrishna Pillai, Thoppil Bhasi, Idasserri Govindam Nair and Keshava Dev. The challenge and the protest voiced in their several literary works are such that a whole book will have to be written if a proper picture is to be given.

However, a couple of examples to show the nature of the protest voiced by some outstanding writers should suffice. Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, one of the most outstanding poets of the twentieth century has written an epoch-making poem under the title *Vazhakkala* (A Bunch of Banana fruit). The synopsis of the story is : a poor Harijan raises a banana tree in his yard and his children dance with joy when the fruit matures. But the landlord removes the bunch when it becomes ripe. The grief of the children and the cruelty of the landlord are portrayed vividly and movingly. Towards the end of the poem, the poet pronounces a terrible warning to the capitalists.

*Will ever thy progeny rest content
Without wrecking vengeance
O host of oppressed community!*

The poem was on the lips of most of the readers for several months after it was published. Several such poems written by the leading poets of the period served to spread an attitude of revolt among the underprivileged.

One can cite hundreds of short stories and scores of novels depicting more or less similar sentiments. I shall here refer to one novel written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the Malayalam novelist who is now internationally known. His *Rantitangazhi* (1949) (Two Measures of Grain) was a bold departure from the usual run of romantic novels, which were popular then. The story takes place in Kuttanad, the rice-bowl of Kerala and the main characters belong to the most underprivileged pariah community. Koran who hails from another place settles down here as a farm labourer and organizes a landless labourers union against the landlords. Things reach a climax when Chacko, the son of his own landlord, tries to molest his young wife Chiruta. Koran kills Chacko and is sent to prison for six years. In his handling of the story Thakazhi is able to create an awakened class consciousness. Many critics consider *Rantitangazhi* superior to Thakazhi's more popular *Chemmeen*. Both the novels are available in translation in Hindi, English and many other languages. For novels and short stories written to incite class struggle, the reader may like to refer to *A Survey of Malayalam Literature* by the present author.

Kerala with its high percentage of literacy, extreme poverty and unemployment has been a veritable hunting ground for politicians of every description. Even the illiterate labourer is conscious of his claims, not to speak of the literate worker. For the spread of this awareness, the writers of Kerala are responsible in a large measure. Each major party has a set of literary associates. Apart from the writers who tow the line of political parties, there are others who are committed to social reconstruction in general. All these writers have exploited the literary medium considerably and made people class-conscious. This is how creative writers in Malayalam helped to foster movements against established socio-cultural patterns. Their influence spread far and wide and prepared the ground for a change. They have challenged the very basis of

established customs and systems. Even though there were no physical mass-scale violent movement in India, there was a large-scale mental revolution which paved the way for radical change. In our democratic approach to socialism, we have progressed considerably. Our attitude towards caste and class has changed notably. To realize the magnitude and extent of the change, we have to look back at conditions which prevailed in our country eight or nine decades ago.

Creative writers sent a new current in the socially frozen atmosphere. Scholastic writers also voiced their protest and reasoned out the necessity for reform; but the creative writers could articulate the need more beautifully and more powerfully. They had a following both in the upper and lower strata of the people. The new awareness thus created made the thinkers look inwards into the disabilities of their own communities and analyze the stagnant tradition which hampered their progress. They also looked outwards and realized how others viewed them. The result was a number of communal organizations set up with a definite social purpose. The more important among them are the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) for *Ezhavas* (1903), the Yogakshema Sabha for the Nambudiris (1908), and the Nair Service Society (NSS) for the Nairs (1914); all started within a few years of the publication of *Indulekha*. While the SNDP Yogam tried for the all-round progress of the *Ezhavas*, the NSS attempted social reform like the eradication of the barriers of subcastes, abolition of wasteful practices and mitigation of the evils of the joint family system as reflected in *Indulekha*. The Yogakshema movement agitated for the marriage of all the junior Nambudiri males within the community itself and for the abolition of the *purdah* system among females.

The general awakening also generated certain other movements in which several communities joined hands. The most important among these are the Malaya'ee Memorial of 1891 and the Vaikom Satyagraha movement of 1924. The resentment of the people of Travancore against the policy of importing persons from outside, particularly Tamil Brahmans, for important posts in public service when qualified persons were available in the state, took the shape of a memorandum submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore. The petition was signed by 10,028 persons belonging to all castes and creeds.

We see another type of protest in the Vaikom Satyagraha movement. The approach roads to the temples were not open to the *Avarnas* and the protest against this freedom precipitated at Vaikom temple. The significant point is that the chief leaders of this movement were *savarnas* like Mannath Padmanabhan, K. P. Kesava Menon, and K. Kelappan. The enlightened caste Hindus gave strong support to the movement. After twenty months of continued struggle the satyagraha finally ended in success, thanks to the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi. The movement for temple entry registered a crowning victory when the Travancore Maharaja issued the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936.

These reform movements had considerable success because of the strong support from the vast majority of people. The support came because of the general awakening among the masses and in this awakening, the great writers of Kerala made a positive and definite contribution.

If the present day Kerala is something better than a 'lunatic asylum', the intelligent, powerful, and subtle protests, and challenges voiced by Chandu Menon, Kumaran Asan, Vallathol and the progressive writers of the contemporary period are in a large measure responsible. The lower castes and the working class are no doubt having a better deal now than ever before.

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Discussion

on Paper by K M George

K J SHAH/ How is it that Guru Narayana who believed in one God, one caste, and one religion, said while opening a temple: I consecrate not a brahman Shiva but an *Ezhava* Shiva? Why does he not accept both, as in Tamil Nadu?

N SANJEEVI/ Mahatma Gandhi was more interested in Kerala because it is perhaps the greatest repository of ancient Tamil culture, and has been effected by various events. There are typical parallels between the Malayalam and Tamil literatures, namely, *i.* the author of *Indulekha*, the first Malayalam novel, was a judge, so also was the first Tamil novel by a judge, Munsii Vedanayakam Pillai. In the latter case it is a Christian—a contemporary of Ramalingaswami who wished among many other things that blind superstition be buried; and *ii.* Ramalingaswami who like Narayana Guru knew Sanskrit and Tamil, emphasized the worship of the lamp and light, specially to help the *Ezhavas* to seek their identity. Therefore, comparative studies of parallel movements should be made.

I have a few questions:

1. Why did Guru Narayana hesitate (though he wanted to remove untouchability) to support the Mahatma, specially when he met him personally for this purpose ?
2. How is it that without opposing Sanskrit there is a movement for social change? This is in sharp contrast to Tamil Nadu.
3. What are the most important aspects of dissent/protest as revealed in pre-modern Malayalam literature ?
4. What is the cause of high literacy and lack of hero-worship in Kerala compared to Tamil ?
5. Is there any example of dissent and protest in pre-modern period ?

T K OOMMEN/ There are some general problems of a conceptual nature which need to be investigated in this context. While there are systematic attacks on many social evils through literary movements, why is there total absence of

social movements in Kerala, say, in respect of untouchability ? If in these movements literature played an important role, how are the social movements to be related with the writings of the day ? In other words, problems of inference and proof should be clearly worked out. A distinction between literary protest movements, and protest movements as such, for specific social change should be made. The former may not give rise to social action, and programmes because there may be a time-gap between the two. The social movement may itself give rise to protest literature, that nurtures the movement. Again, both protest literature and protest may coincide, as in the case of Dalit Panthers.

PUSHPA SURI/ 1. In what way was this protest of the poets, in the South, different from other voices of protest in the North, for example, Kabir, Guru Nanak, or Daddu who had appeared long before ?

2. Can an analogy be drawn between these two periods: the period of modern Kerala and South India with Christianity and North India of medieval times with Islam ? Possibly the advent of new religions, like Islam and Christianity gave rise to Sikhism on the one hand, and on the other to the Arya Samaj ?

3. Did the fear of conversions give rise to the call for reform, again like Arya Samaj ?

LEEIA DUSE/ Certain factual statements are erroneous, and need correction. For example, Nairs are not considered by him as shudras. But there is a line of pollution, and Nairs are much above this line. There are a few kshatriyas in Kerala who stand below the Nambudiri Brahmans; then come the Ambalavasis, and then the Nairs. Nambudiris do 'marry' Nair girls, but in the *sambandham* relationship between the Nair and the Nambudiri, for the Nambudiri, *sambandham* was not marriage; it was only some kind of concubinage. However, for the Nair *sambandham* was marriage, in as much as it legitimized the offspring born to a Nair woman.

V V JOHN/ Kerala's socio-political system based on casteism, has not particularly improved as suggested by him. This is despite whatever poems, novels, stories and other forms of literature may reveal about revolt, or protest against the caste-system.

SACHICHIDANANDA/ If one still finds archaic forms of Tamil culture in Kerala, why is Kerala a great laboratory of social change ? What is the contribution of Christians and Muslims to this literature of dissent and protest in Kerala ?

J S GREWAL/ In general, in what way does the literary expression of protest result in social action ?

RESPONSE

K M GEORGE/ Chandu Menon was not a Christian, like Vedanayakam Pillai, the early Tamil novelist. He is a Nair and portrays vividly his community in this novel. Chandu Menon idolizes Nair women, and in *Indulokha* he sees the ideal woman of Kerala who knows Sanskrit and English, besides, Malayalam.

The high literacy in Kerala may be attributed to the advent of Christianity, whose missions were interested in education. From the eighteenth century, missionaries had started many educational institutions. But a feature that marks out Kerala in comparison with other regions is that it has a more composite culture; Christians 20-30 per cent and Muslims 10-20 per cent together form about 40 per cent of the population. Hence, to a great extent, this fusion of cultures has been responsible for its progress. Kerala's attitude towards Sanskrit is worth noting, because after Malayalam, Malayalees would like to learn Sanskrit and English. This is clearly seen in the ideal heroine portrayed by *Chandu Menon*.

About the role and interaction of literary movements to a social movement, a categorical answer is not possible. In some cases the social movement precedes the literary movement as in the case of progressive writing; and in other cases the literary movements precede a social movement, as in the case of caste in Kerala; one lends support to the other. What is important is the mutual influence and the cross-fertilization of ideas and the interdependence of these channels.

Sambandham is looked upon by the Nambudiri and Nair communities in different ways. However, for the Nair it is marriage, for the Nambudiris it is something less than that; nothing more than a social approval of their connection with the women of the Nair community. A Nambudiri's formal marriage is termed *Veli*, and this is the wedlock between the senior (first) male member of a family with a girl of the same community. It is precisely on account of the irresponsible relationship resulting from the *sambandham* that Chandu Menon raised a protest, though indirectly.

Whether the Nair are shudras or not, a controversy prevails over this question. I have taken the view that the Nair community is a composite one, with several gradations within it. For instance, among them, there are dhobies and barbers who take the appellation 'Nair', say *Veluthedathu* Nair (dhobi) or the *Vilakkithala* Nair (barber) and at the top there are the Nairs with a martial tradition. However, a majority of the community can be identified with shudras. Of course, Nambudiris select a high caste Nair for 'marriage'.

I cannot agree fully with the opinion of John, according to whom there has been no change in the attitude towards caste in the last five or six decades. Caste hierarchy is still there, admittedly, but it is considerably less aggressive, and intercaste marriages are no longer a taboo. As a matter of fact, it is encouraged and the number of such cases has increased considerably. Without

distinction of caste or creed, everyone has access to any school or college, and no one can stop another from walking on any road. These are definite improvements which one can see.

With reference to Sachchidananda's question of the contribution of Christians and Muslims to Malayalam literature there are several well-known and respected writers in both the communities; names like Mohammad Basheer and Ponkumiam Varki can be particularly mentioned in this connection. Education and social awareness are not the monopoly of any particular community in Kerala, and creative talent is equally discernible without any distinction of caste or social status.

V Raghavan

India : Tradition and Non-Conformism in Creative Arts

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONTINUITY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION IS ITS capacity to innovate and accept change. This paper will deal specially with it at the cultural and the creative arts' level. A key-concept of Indian culture is, *Yoga-Ksema*. *Yoga* is fresh accession and *Ksema* is conservation of what has already been acquired. The term has been better known in its compound form and as meaning well-being in general, rather than, analytically, in its component ideas. The general meaning derives from its primary significance and shows that well-being or progress has these two aspects and is the joint process of these two forces. As no bird flies without two wings and no vehicle runs without two wheels, there is no progress of man except on these two feet.

It may be seen that *Yoga* or accession involves the *new*, *Ksema* the *old*; that is, change and innovation, and preservation, and continuation of what is durable. It is further significant that in the divine concept of *Yoga-Ksema*, *Yoga* takes the lead, rather than *Ksema*. It is as it should be, for *Yoga* stands for the dynamic principle. At the same time, all motion requires direction and control, acceleration and brake, freedom and discipline, both are necessary and inseparable in orderly progress.

In terms of the title of the paper, the concept of tradition is covered by *Ksema*, and *non-conformism*—which means the same thing as innovation or change—is covered by *Yoga*. It is not imaginable that a culture has had such a long history without change. Nor can a culture be recognized without an identity which belongs to it and underlies its continuity. Development and enrichment have been possible in this way. If Hinduisim is characterized by a pluralism, if within its framework, it has a variety of paths to suit different types of minds and stages of evolution and tastes and tendencies, it is because of this inherent vitality which has put forth fresh growths within itself. Growth was not hampered, and the repetition of the common phraseology 'dead weight of the past' cannot help in the correct understanding of the historical panorama,

the mosaic called Hindu culture. We may remind ourselves of what Kalidasa—than whom we cannot think of a greater flower of the genius of this culture—said ‘Everything is not good merely because it is new’. Apparent heterodoxies, chastened by criticism, came to stand and endure as greater orthodoxies, as highlights of the tradition. Tradition thus went on gathering and gaining in depth and dimension.

We shall see this process from the earliest phases and in different departments of thought, culture and creative activity.

The earlier form of Vedic thought emphasized action and performance of ordained acts, rites, duties; *Dharma* and *Karma*. But there were exceptional groups like the *Aja-Prsnīyas* who did not perform any sacrifices and preferred a passive and mental process of just reciting the concerned scriptures. This first non-conformism led to the development of the idea and belief that he who did the act and he who knew it, both attained the same fruit. The devout recital of the hymns for the specific desires grew as a new form of worship and it is this development that is marked by some of the *Brahmanas* (e.g., the *Sama-vidhana*) and the texts like *Rg-vidhana*. This also led to the better known, the most important phase, the path of knowledge, *Jnana* as opposed to action, *Karma*. The advocates of knowledge, were non-conformists who denounced *Karma* and with them came into vogue the doctrines of the *Upanisads*, all that had gone to build up the philosophy which is still esteemed as the highest peak of Hindu achievement in the realm of thought. *Veda* thus led to *Vedanta*, younger but greater; *Jnana* became *Vijnana*.

Like the sages of the *Upanisads*, one of the greatest of early non-conformists was Kapila, promulgator of the path of Knowledge, of anti-ritual, called *Samkhya*. It has been recorded (Baudhayana, II.vi.30) that before Kapila, the stations of life for man were three—student, house-holder and the forest-dweller who retired from active domestic life; and *Sannyasa*, the fourth, introduced by Kapila was held unauthoritative. The early sages of the *Veda* and the *Upanisads* devoted themselves to penance and philosophical contemplation, living all the time their lives as householders, although the *Upanisads* knew and speak not unoften of complete renunciation. But the fourth stage of absolute renunciation, *Sannyasa*, became the prevailing order for the full seekers of knowledge, as a result of Kapila, an *Asuri*, coming of *Asura* descent.

For centuries, *Vedanta* continued to be pursued by householders and/or the third stage men of retirement—*Vanaprasthas*. On the one hand, a compromise was reached by which *Karma* was not neglected but was pursued cumulatively with *Jnana* (*Samuccaya*); and the form of *Sannyasa* or renunciation was also not of an absolute type. It was Sankara, who departed from this doctrine of cumulative pursuit of *Karma* and *Jnana* and the halting practice of *Sannyasa*. He was condemned by his contemporaries and immediate followers like Bhaskara for his non-conformism and for his heterodoxy! But Bhaskara and his school of critics have gone into oblivion, Sankara stands as the high tower of light, as the greatest exponent of the spiritual wisdom of the *Rsis*.

It must be noted as we have already hinted, Indian non-conformism or reformist movement is not destructive but consolidative, a process that purifies, deepens and heightens the tradition; *Karma*, *Dharma*, etc., were conserved for their disciplinary value. This alternate or concurrent play of the principles of *Yoga* and *Ksēma* may be observed all through. There is perhaps no text or no scripture which offered more non-conformist ideas than the *Bhagavad-gita*, but one does not see it in that light because of the spirit of synthesis and reconciliation and the functional or hierarchic adjustment of the roles of the different disciplines, approaches, and paths that the *Gita* effected. The opposition of *Karma* and *Jnana* was resolved and, with the silken nexus of *Bhakti*, the two were brought together. *Yajna* was re-defined or refined as any selfless action dedicated to God. An imperceptible but complete and effective change in the whole outlook took place.

Among philosophers who propounded various schools there were, besides the monists and idealists, dualists, pluralists and realists. Among interpreters of the *Vedānta* there were absolutists and theists, and among the latter, those devoted to different forms of Divinity. Non-conformism or freedom of thought was never stifled. Indeed many brahmans became Buddhists and Jains; Buddhism, which like *Vedānta*, arose in opposition to Action and Ritual, did not remain monolithic; schisms and reformist movements arose there too, some of which tried to bridge the gulf of difference, in course of time, by growths like the early *Mahayana* and later *Tantrayana*. Jainism came to terms and settled down to ways of co-existence in India itself; Buddhism did this over the whole of South-East Asia. All this was understood as diverse paths to the same summit, rivers of different lengths, sizes, and straight, or winding course, all falling into the one, same sea. This ideology, coming from the *Upanisads*, and reiterated by poets and hymnologists, and shared by Jain writers too, received a fresh emphasis from the *Siddhas*, of the post-classical age, which included Buddhists too, who cut across denominations, and in their songs, underlined the inner harmony of a universal experience; fundamental unity—this was the voice of mysticism in all times and ages; and this harping—the harp was their invariable accompaniment,—and its poetic proliferation expressed themselves in a non-conformist, unconventional language.

The very growth of this mystic song literature of the saint-singers, to whom we owe the passing on of the wisdom of the *Rsis*, through the medium not of Sanskrit, not in the form of commentaries or treatises, but of songs, is an innovation, a result of the non-conformist spirit; this had the greatest significance for the growth of the neo Indo-Aryan and other spoken languages of the country and of literatures in them, not to mention of music.

In modern times, non-conformism and reform by leaders of new nationalism in Bengal, Maharashtra, etc., and of the spreading movements like the Arya Samaj, took the form of anti-medieval aberrations and of a harking back to pristine forms. As against the *Vedānta* which tends to belittle positive life-interests, Aurobindo emphasized the mysticism of Vedic hymns and the *Tantra*.

It has been thus a re-emphasis of forgotten or neglected aspects or paths. The greatest revolutionary of modern times is Gandhiji but it is the traditional concepts that he used, the *Gita* as Mother and guide of daily conduct, *Ramnam* as the daily tablet of physical and moral health, *Ramarajya* as the ideal of *Swaraj*, *Satyagraha* as the tool for experiments in Truth, *Ahimsa*, *Brahmacharya*, *Asrama*-life, etc. Indeed poets like Tagore who were non-conformists in education, particularly with regard to the type clamped on the country by the colonial power, tried to recapture the *Asrama* ideals.

Effort at helping others to salvation, saving humanity, sympathy with the suffering, service to fellow beings—different forms of *Ista-purta* and *Lokasamgraha* are as old as *Veda*, *Vedanta*, Buddhism and the *Gita*. In modern times, the enlightened Indian mind turned away from customary religious activity and charity and took to social service as a chief form of public work. Although part of the Indian tradition, this development received a test impetus from the Christian impact in modern times.

We shall now turn to creative work in a more specific sense, to literature and arts. *Chandas* meaning metre and verse, was in its first phase, confined to the Vedic hymns. Expression outside this was called *Bhasa* and *Loka*, prose, short or long, *Brahmana*, *Sutra*, *Bhasya*. Valmiki was the first *Rsi* to create poetry outside the realm of the *Veda*—*amnyad anyatra nutanah Chandasam avatarah*. The ballads and stories of single heroes or heroines of different royal houses—the *Upakhyanas* and *Akhyanas* were shorter forms of the Epic; from both these, classical *Mahakavya* such as those by Kalidasa were further developments. The Buddha had interdicted the employment of the poetic medium for preaching his teachings; but non-conformists like Asvaghosa and Matrceta not only gave up the spoken *Prakrits* and adopted Sanskrit but harnessed poetry and drama in the service of the new religion. Indeed when Asvaghosa used metaphysical concepts and abstractions as characters in his play *Sariputra-prakarana*, he was breaking new ground. Like Buddhism and Jainism, epigraphy was also using first the *Prakrits*; but the switch over to Sanskrit for inscriptions soon followed as an inevitable development. From the inscriptions which employed verse and prose, for recording royal historical achievements, three important innovations came about: the *Campu* or poetic composition in mixed verse and prose, the prose narrative like the *Harsacarita* of Bana and the long historical poem like the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. Side by side with the aesthetic appeal, the edificatory and educational value of the long poem was an accepted purpose of poetry; from the latter, some enterprising scholarly poets thought of harnessing poetry to teach grammar and other technical subjects. This was a bold non-conformist experiment which poetic critics like Bhamaha frowned upon; however, in course of time the *Sastra-kavya*, the technical-cum-poetic composition, became an accepted genre of literary production.

More than in the field of poetry, it is in that of drama that we see in a pronounced manner the play of the spirit of non-conformism leading to the

evolution of new forms. As early as the Mauryan times, poet-minister Subandhu made a bold innovation by working out the play within a play technique in his creation *Vasavadattatatyadhara*, making the characters of each preceding Act spectators of the succeeding Act. King Harsavardhana's drama on the self-sacrifice of *Bodhisattva Jimutavahana*, the *Nagananda*, created a commotion in the quiet conventional drama-circles and paved the way for the recognition of *Santa* not only as an additional *Rasa*, but in course of time, as the greatest *Rasa*. The trend that Asvaghosa began—of a play of religious and philosophical purpose—was forgotten; but independently in the beginning of tenth century Kashmir, Jayanta, logician and poet and adviser to King Sankaravarman, wrote a four-act play in which different schools of religion and philosophy were thrown in confrontation: religious corruption and hypocrisy were exposed and sincerity and religious harmony, and the message that all paths followed in purity lead to the same goal, was brought out. This is a unique play and not conforming at all to any type or definition in Bharata. The stage-manager says to his assistant in the prologue: 'Well, I am fed up with this Jayanta, who with his pull with the king, is throwing his weight about and has thrust on me this play. What kind of play do you call it? I might as well retire from the stage!' However this new type reasserted itself shortly after this, in the *Prabodhacandrodaya* of the *Vedantin* Krsnamisra, to be followed by quite a train of philosophical plays.

Outside of the eleven or twelve old forms of drama, at the end of the classical period, playwrights who had seen the saturation of the traditional types, started looking out on all sides for new ideas. This gave rise to the class of *Uparupakas*, the minor forms or supplementary forms of stage-performances. These had a technical speciality in that the entertainment aspect—the music and dance—dominated over the story and plot. These subsidiary forms of the Sanskrit Theatre had a connection with the popular Theatre.

Let us listen to what music has to say on this question. After the sacred music of the *Samans*, we hear of a mundane counterpart of it, marked by all its characteristics. When we come to the earliest available treatise on the art, we hear of the earliest scale—the *Gandhara-grama* as having already become archaic or gone to the heavens. The music dealt with by Bharata was in the two *Gramas*, of *Sa* and *Ma*. The stringed instruments had an open board and the melodies played, the *Jatis*, had not yet become defined into *Ragas*. The ancient form of music called *Marga* soon yielded place to *Desi* music. We have discussed the concepts of *Marga* and *Desi* elsewhere in detail and the best way to understand the operation of these two forces is the linguistic analogy of Sanskrit and *Prakrits*. Although characteristics of singing, melodic elaboration, features of composition, etc., persisted from the *Saman*-chants, yet by the time of Matanga, *Desi* music had come to prevail mostly, as the name of his work *Bṛhddesi* shows. But as in the linguistic parallel, here too, norms, codifications and principles of grammar and aesthetics grew and the concept of classical or traditional, now assumed a new connotation.

A considerable number of *Ragas* and song-types had a folk origin and these contributed to the enrichment of the art. Enrichment grew also with individual artists who created new melodies on the accepted laws of *Raga*-structure and aesthetics, the principles or *Samvada*, etc. Musicians still continue to invent new *Ragas*; while the tendency is rare in Karnatik, in Hindustani it is quite a fashion. The *Raga* has a more fluid ethos in Hindustani, and from the times from which we have definite reminiscences—say, from Tansen onwards—we have varieties of some *Ragas* as rendered by particular masters, and this, along with the phenomenon of *Gharanas*, has contributed to this character of the Hindustani *Raga*. Hindustani shows also a greater tendency to fashion mixed or *Misra Ragas*; even young players sport in their recitals their own *Misra Ragas*. How far all these are aesthetically satisfying or are just indulgence in vain fancy on the part of the artistes is to be considered.

Reference was made to *Ragas* assimilated from folk melodies or taken, refined and sophisticated from that source. There are also invigorations of a tradition by borrowing from a sister tradition or a different school of the same tradition. There is an element of novelty in this but no real non-conformism. But a similar impact of alien airs has had a different reception in the tradition. At the end of the seventeenth century, Venkatamakhin, the reputed grammarian of Karnatik music, refers in contemptuous terms to *Ragas* like *Pantuvarali* as favourites of the vulgar and unfit for serious and dignified elaboration in the accepted forms of *Gita*, *Prabandha*, *Thaya*, and *Alapa*. But all these have joined the ranks of blue-blooded *Ragas*; time, as well as handling by masters, have invested them with the requisite beauty and appeal.

Reference to Venkatamakhin, the Panini of Karnatik music, brings us to the new development, the scheme of 72 *Melas* which he devised for accommodating all the possible *Ragas*, the inherited, the current and future possibilities. But it did not take long for the mathematical possibilities of this scheme to be worked out, and every one of these 72 being taken as *Ragas*. This was something which proved the greatest innovation; several of these lacked the requisite *Raga*-character, being just scales and involved also the defect of the *Vivadi* or the dissonant note. However these having come to stay, gifted composers like Tyagaraja, thanks to their genius, negotiated them with skill, adopting the well-known resources of the art and the principles of *Raga*-treatment, *alpatva*, *langhana* and *gamaka*. The *Raga*-repertoire had a boom and a mass of compositions burst forth, some of them by Tyagaraja and Diksitar being creations of beauty. These new things have, thanks to the eminent composers, become part of tradition as consolidated in recent times. Some of these are however patently unmusical; many, being mechanical scales, do not admit of elaboration, and the efforts of performers to elaborate them, while bespeaking their knowledge and capacity, fail to create a rapport, and leave the listener cold and mystified. There are not senior Vidvans wanting who doubt the *Melakarta* framework being a blessing. Hindustani musicologists do not accept forty of these. But as a few ancient *Ragas*, possessing majesty

or plaintive grace like *Nata* and *Varali*, which would come under this category, cannot be given up, the proper attitude seems to be not to take a doctrinaire stance and accept things on their beauty-value.

The age of the great composers was also an age of departure in the form of performance of the art. The tradition till then was the rendering of what was called *Caturdandi*, *Gita*, *Prabandha*, *Thaya*, and *Alapa* of the chosen *Ragas*. Anecdotes are also remembered of certain masters singing some *Ragas* for some hours or even a few days. The evolution of the *Krti*, particularly at the hands of the three great composers, the Trinity as they are called, turned the whole face of performance, its content, style and highlights. A new *Kutcheri* developed, which, if a great master of the courts of the seventeenth or eighteenth century would see from his heaven, will consider poor and queer. But the new *Kutcheri* developed its own *paddhati*, its tradition, technique and aesthetics, the opening, the place for *Raga* and composition, the *pièce de resistance* of *Raga*, *Tana*, and *Pallavi*, and the finale of *Ragamala* and shorter lyrics. This was so in our earlier days, quite a sumptuous thing for not less than three hours. Today, the *Kutcheri* is getting pruned more and more, and those of the older generation, performers as well as those who enjoy, cannot help feeling that instead of full meals, they are now having a brunch or high tea. Compared to this Karnatik situation, Hindustani is less dominated by numbers and compositions and continues in spacious unfoldment of a limited number of *Ragas*.

In Karnatik music, the adoption of the violin, and its adaptation to classical performance is an example of a fruitful development resulting from Western contact. As we have shown in an article on the subject, there may be bow and string instruments of ancient India, and the precursor of the Western violin might have been, as historians agree, the India *Ravanastron*, but in the eighteenth century, the European violin, which was seen with the foreign military band, was taken up by the Karnatik composer Balusvami Diksitar and by the pupils of his brother, Muttusvami Diksitar, and adapted to Karnatik music. The violin became the standard accompaniment to vocal music; unlike in Hindustani, it displaced indigenous stringed accompaniment; the aesthetic gain is however doubted in some quarters. But in the case of the harmonium—which enjoys more vogue in Hindustani and is rejected in Karnatik—there is no doubt about the instrument being detrimental to the genius of our music.

The same acquaintance with European band-airs made Muttusvami Diksitar compose his Sanskrit Karnatik band-air pieces popularly called *Mottusvara-sahityas*. These are simple pieces, playfully composed, and useful for congregational singing by students.

In recent times, some music educators and musicologists have taken the lead to fill up, according to their notions, some gaps in our music, by imitating or essaying in the line of Western music. Apart from using Western names like opera, they have also started their own orchestras. These latter meant just playing together; even in ancient Indian group music, of voice and

instruments, *Brnda* and *Kutapa*, at best amounted to some polyphonous performance and no orchestration. More recently, All India Radio has taken up this experiment on a definitely more technical plane and performing artistes of status and ability like Jayarama Iyer and Ravi Shankar have made some new compositions; Vishnudas Shirali has also striven in this direction. These, on the one hand, fail as examples of real orchestration, and on the other, have also failed to captivate the listeners; more than these two shortcomings, they proceed on lines detrimental to the core of genius of Indian music, the *Raga*, our musical staple.

Rabindranth is associated with a non-conformist musical venture. As a young man, he had come under the influence of Irish airs which he tried in his *Valmiki-pratibha*. The later *Rabindrasangita*, which is an experiment in *Raga*-music, comparable perhaps to blank or free verse in poetry, has come to be cultivated and performed but it is outside the repertoire of the leading musicians. It is only a small modern by-way in Indian music.

The allied art of Indian dance now demands our attention. With the awakening that had come in the field of this art in modern times and in the many active steps that had been taken for the promotion of its different schools and forms, solo or group, individual or dramatic, artists and leaders of schools had found it necessary to prepare their own new programmes, not content with the traditional ones that had come down. Creative effort has mainly taken the form of preparing dance-dramas, (ballets as some insist on calling them) and this has been done with a large-scale resorting to the mixing of styles and schools. Taking even a solo-art like the Karnatik *Bharata Natya*, the craze for the innovation, or the desire not to be bound by conventional forms, has resulted only in the mixing of the *adavus* of one composition—*Jatisvara*, *Varna* or *Tillana*—into those of another, thus obliterating the individuality of what are, each of them, distinct dance-compositions. A recent departure is the craze for interpolating *Karanas* from Bharata's text or sculpture; any of these are put in anywhere, in any number or in any sequence. The way they are thrown in shows no understanding of either the *Karanas* as such or of the particular *Karanas* used; there is no organic creative composition that is produced and it passes and gains momentum mainly because dance-audiences understand their art far less than music-audiences do theirs. One may take up *Kirtanas* for *Abhinaya* but cannot expect to have replaced *padas*. Personal décor and costume and stage property are not intrinsic to this art which is based on its own intrinsic symbolic and interpretative technique—its unique *Natyadharmi*. Much more regrettable is the development, under the same impact of Western presentations, of stage-craft and stage-decoration. A *Bharata Natya* artist has greater need to learn music or meanings of the songs than such stage-craft. With all these pains, none of these budding dancers (or others who just pass from budding to fading, without the central-stage of blossoming), have been able to excel a genius which has shown wholly within the framework of

tradition the excellence and heights that are possible in this art. The artist we have in mind needs no mention; she is foremost in your minds also.

In different arts and creative fields we have been following different criteria of judgement. In painting, one following the Western technique like Raja Ravi Verma was condemned as non-Indian; Nandalal, Abanindranath and other 'renaissance' artists looked to ancient models and tried to recapture Ajanta. In music and dance, the prevailing judgement is authenticity and excellence according to tradition. But in literature, the writers who have been acclaimed are those who have followed foreign models—new metrical patterns like the sonnet, blank and free verse; forms like short story, essay, novels, one-act plays and to a small extent tragedies, considered to be the hall-marks of new writing. Whether these formal adaptations alone vouch for real creativity or aesthetic quality is quite another question. How many of our annual prize winning works will endure is for the coming generation to say.

Novelty is certainly a component of a creative work. Imagination or genius is defined by a Sanskrit aesthete as the mind capable of ever-new flights—*prajna navanavonmesasalinipratibha mata*. But this is not everything, there are the more substantial virtues that are necessary to make a piece a thing of enduring beauty and its creator an artist of all time. Taking the analogy of physical beauty, Valmiki says that Rama was so beautiful that he captivated the eyes and hearts of even men and they were loath to take off their eyes from his person. Vyasa describes Draupadi's beauty as being something which made women who looked at her wish they were men. This beauty is something beyond and not dependent on the externals, like the contemporary hair style of Rama or the dress of Draupadi. By merely sporting side burns or long hair ugly ones cannot become beautiful.

When we say tradition and non-conformism, what do we mean by these two terms? We have seen in this wide sweep how on the sea of progress and historical evolution, there is an ebb and flow and interplay of these two forces, non-conformist and innovatory trends, becoming consolidated into tradition, and tradition being all the time receptive and resilient. Tradition is called *Sampradaya*, a term most used in music and dance. It means what has been given (*Daya*) to a generation and the two prepositions *Sam* and *Pra* emphasize the excellence and the trueness of this to the genius of the heritage. In the whole field of Sanskrit literature, we have been able to discover one place where *Sampradaya* has been defined; it is in dance that we have found it. Kallinatha, in his commentary on the last, the dance chapter, of the *Sangita Ratnakara* says: '*Sampradaya* is what is learnt in the unbroken teacher-pupil succession and includes such things as do not go against the fundamentals of the *Sastra* and which, although not exactly present in the *Sastra*, would still be permissible or be congruous with the *Sastra*'. And Kallinatha quotes two verses in support: 'That is *Sampradaya* which is communicated by one who knows that subject well and says sincerely and as it should be'. 'That is

Sampradaya which has been said or found in any part of the whole body of a branch of learning and has become stabilized by continuity, as in the case of a piece of golden jewellery'. Jewellery we know is a sure index for identifying a culture; there are characteristic motifs and designs of different peoples and in a vast stretch in time-space, a particular piece could still be recognized as authentic.

Non-conformism has certain ways of working. The mind works not in a vacuum but on the background of the ideas it has and goes on imbibing. As we have seen in the survey, many non-conformists went back to a pristine, more simple or basic phase of the tradition. The phenomenon of 'renaissance' means this. It also took something from another part of the tradition, governed by another space-time context. A genius can spot out elements of value and beauty and transpose, graft, and produce something wonderful, which while being wonderful, would still lie in some other part of the tradition, in a somewhat different setting. For example, *Sangatis* with which Tyagaraja's genius made his *Kritis* scintillate at the very opening; the *Pallavi*, are adaptations from the variations known in the singing of songs for *Abhinaya*-improvisation and in the *Pallavi* technique and, in the more ancient times, was known as *Rupakalapti*. What is taken has to fall in line, get integrated and become woven into, the genius of the tradition; *Iman* or *Jaijaianti* may be taken by the South from the North but it undergoes an 'initiation', a *Diksa* so to say, and gets Karnatikized; the names *Yamunakalyani* or *Dvijavanti* are not so important as the ethos into which they are absorbed. Even things from extraneous sources enter only through this process of congenial assimilation. What does not get into such assimilation, struggles on the fringe and sooner or later, is allowed to die. Such is non-conformism. Such is tradition, always vibrant, assimilating its correct material of enrichment and growing in its puissance.

S C Dube

Summing up*

THIS SEMINAR HAS GENERATED SO MUCH MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION AND HAS RAISED such important conceptual and methodological issues that I find it difficult to do justice to its richness and diversity in a brief summing up. To me it was a truly rewarding and enriching experience. The papers as well as the discussions were most stimulating. The perceptive insights that emerged in the course of the debate have influenced, in an appreciable measure, our thinking on the subject. I shall try to recapitulate the major trends of discussion and to identify some of the advances registered by the seminar. But this, I am afraid, will be a very personal view: I am under no illusions that I can summarize comprehensively and adequately the varied currents and cross-currents of thought that featured in our dialogue.

In a gathering of intellectuals, especially in a cross-disciplinary group like the one present at this seminar, it was inevitable that we should initially have engaged in a semantic debate. It was in fact necessary that we should have begun by raising issues of theory and method and continued to press some of them until the very end. This has contributed to the emergence of a clear frame of reference. It is significant that in the course of our discussions we did not have any cognitive confusion nor any serious difficulties in communication, although in the beginning there was a considerable degree of 'caste consciousness' among the practitioners of different specialities and sensitiveness regarding the recognition of disciplinary boundaries. For us the quest was paramount, and this made it unnecessary for us to wear our disciplinary armours all the time. Divergences and confrontations were unavoidable, but happily they did not run into a dead-end; they served a useful purpose and led to a beneficial cross-fertilization of ideas.

We started our intellectual endeavour with a series of nagging doubts. At the very outset it was apparent that the notions of dissent, protest, and reform

*Based on the transcript of the valedictory address of Professor S C Dube on the concluding session of the Seminar on 8 September 1975.

have been adopted, but perhaps they are not yet fully adapted to the cultural ethos of India. What meanings should we assign to them in specific Indian contexts? I think we had an extremely useful discussion on 'native categories of thought' *vs.* 'superimposed meanings'. It was recognized that by uncritically superimposing certain meanings, implicitly accepted in the West, to our unique historical experience we can unwittingly distort the social reality of India. There was a strong feeling that we should move towards a clearer explication of their meanings as they apply to the Indian tradition—the meanings that we ourselves give to these concepts. In scholarly communication it is inevitable that we borrow terms, but it is essential that we use them as precision tools and that we relate them to the cultural contexts in which they are being used. In this connection, we would recall, several participants pointed out the dangers inherent in the process of transfer of meaning leading to distortion in perspective. We have to be careful even about some common terms like religion and duty. Religion does not mean quite the same thing in the East, and in India, as it does in the West. To the Western mind the notion of duty carries certain nuances which are significantly different from those the Eastern mind associates with it. In continuing this dialogue and in our research endeavours that follow from it we must bear this in mind. We shall have to be careful in understanding the native categories of thought and the meanings the people themselves give. Unless we do this there will be an air of unreality about the exercises we undertake.

Let me now come to the operational definitions of some of the key concepts around which we have to build our general framework of enquiry and research activities in this field. Two propositions, which I shall borrow unhesitatingly from one of Merton's well-known paradigms, may be central to our discussion. These relate to cultural ends and to the institutional instrumentalities (or means) to achieve them. If we build our operational definitions of dissent, protest, and reform around them, perhaps we may be moving in the right direction. In *dissent*, there is the possibility of a negative orientation either to cultural ends, or to institutional means, or to both. While it involves a high level of emotional awareness, its social action component tends to be feeble. In *protest* also, the orientation both to the cultural ends and to the instrumentalities of action or to either one of them may be negative. The level of emotional awareness, however, carries with it a degree of involvement. In consequence, there is significantly greater social action. *Reform*, theoretically, may involve a negative orientation either to cultural ends or to institutional means, but it is invariably negative towards both and involves the highest degree of social action. The latter has to be concerted and continuing. It is difficult to speak with certainty about the relationships of dissent, protest, and reform, but on the basis of some of the case studies presented at the seminar the possibility of a unilinear progression cannot be ruled out. Dissent involves articulation of differences, protest is characterized by high degrees of mobilization, and protest involves recognition of new objectives and

institutional means as well as concerted social action to achieve the redefined goals through newly legitimized means. I am aware that even this approach is inadequate in many ways, but one has to have a starting point and an operational definition is only a working tool. After the exercise is done—or, hopefully, while it is being done—we shall arrive at more precise meanings and be able to invest greater exactitude in the terms we use.

A second part of our intellectual effort was focused on the characterization of the Indian ethos. The question to which we addressed ourselves was: Is it possible to offer a capsule summary of the principal attributes and features of the Indian tradition? On this there was a free-flowing discussion and a variety of opinions were expressed. Some of these were substantiated by hard data, others rested on hunches—some of them brilliant and perceptive. A model to which reference was made again and again was that of the Dharmic Society. If we were to go back to the typology of societies developed by David Reissman—tradition-directed societies, inner-directed societies, and other-directed societies—the Dharmic Society would perhaps approximate to the tradition-directed society. In it we get a convenient label, but the ingredients of the Dharmic Society are not altogether clear. Tradition has never represented unending, uninterrupted, and unchanging flow of a normative order determined sometime in the hoary past and continuing until today without any significant redefinition of social objectives and instrumentalities of action. The making of the contemporary tradition involved continuity or selection of elements from the past, conscious or unconscious borrowing, and generally the making of choices from available possibilities. It is the aggregation of these choices and options from the historical experience of Indian society as well from the experience of the other societies that constitutes what could be described roughly as the contemporary tradition. The logic, the rationale, and the process of this selectivity are not sufficiently understood. Also, the patterning of the aggregation has not been adequately analyzed. We have, therefore, only a general sketch of the Dharmic Model. Its central emphases are not always clear, nor do we know much about the direction it gives to the society and the mechanisms it provides for the self-correction of maladies that manifest themselves within it from time to time.

We also discussed the unilinear and the multilinear models for understanding Indian tradition. This part of the discussion was as useful as the two earlier parts, but we had a large number of papers and limited time, and so the discussion could not be as full as some of us would have liked. This perhaps left the contributors of papers as well as the audience mildly dissatisfied. The unilinear model is focussed on the Vedic tradition and traces everything that is of any significance in Indian civilization to this source. It largely represents a book-view of Indian tradition. The authority of the sacred texts is invoked at every step, and it is assumed that this tradition has an unbroken continuity. The multilinear model, on the other hand, takes cognizance of multiple sources that have gone into the making of what we

know today as the Indian tradition. This model presents some conceptual difficulties. From the trends of the discussion I could identify two different types of multilinear models. Let me call Multilinear Model I 'the tree model'. The tree grows from one seed. It has common roots and a common trunk, but once the trunk grows up to a particular height it starts shooting off branches. In other words a unilinear model develops in time into a multilinear one. Such a model would explain some aspects of the Indian tradition, but not all. Multilinear Model II, which is more relevant to the Indian situation, may be called 'the river model'. A number of streams originate at different places, but one by one they meet and form part of one major stream. In a way the Indian tradition corresponds to this model; the only difficulty is that while in a river the different streams lose their identity, in the Indian civilization they have still retained it in some ways. It would be useful to examine these two models carefully.

It cannot be denied that a significant part of our life is tradition-directed. At the same time, there is evidence also of other-direction. In our contacts with the wider world, we have not always been at the giving end; we have also borrowed elements from other cultures. Finally, as a society given to a great deal of reflection and contemplation we have had a strong element of inner direction. What has been handed down to us by tradition as well as the elements coming from outside have been subjected to a deep and searching evaluation. This has given birth to a series of individual heresies and reinterpretations, many of which had a powerful impact on the structural forms as well as on the system of values sustaining it.

We have thus a series of contending models. I have mentioned only a few that came up prominently for discussion. There was also talk about symbiosis which involves coexistence—near but separate existence, with limited interchange between cultures. We have discussed the notion of non-antagonistic strata—horizontal and vertical—in which identities are maintained in functional terms, the different groups interpenetrate, and yet overt antagonism between them is not a primary characteristic. In the course of our discussions we have taken some account of harmonic systems and disharmonic systems and of the consensus model and the conflict model of society. We have also referred to the process of compartmentalization in which one compartment of life leans heavily on tradition, while another freely accepts wide-ranging elements of modernity. I think one of the participants made a thoughtful point when he referred to the existence of a significant degree of consonance in the midst of a great deal of dissonance in our society. This had a bearing on the processes of fusion and integration that have taken place on a large scale without any loss to the individual identities of different groups. We also mentioned the conversion model which implies obliteration of an established identity and acceptance of a new identity. Altogether we have had a multiplicity of approaches to our central problem and considerable diversity in our emphases.

One is left wondering how some kind of thematic unity or integration can be achieved in these divergent and seemingly conflicting approaches.

Let me briefly turn to some of the processes of dissent, protest, and reform in the country. We began our discussion with the problem of their origin. We all agreed that such movements, whether on the level of thought only or on the levels of both thought and action, begin when a want is perceived. A felt inadequacy within the system, in other words, is the starting point of dissent, protest, and reform. The perception of relative deprivation, it was stressed, inspires movements of this type. A chain of thought and action starts when one group begins to contemplate what it does not have but some other groups have. The feeling of denial and injustice stirs discontent and inspires action to rectify the wrong. In this connection we tried to develop several analytical approaches involving single factor analysis and multiple factor analysis. It was recognized that there had to be a certain ferment within—a ferment caused by the recognition of imbalances and disharmonies in the social system. At the same time it was evident that all such ferment does not necessarily lead to dissent, protest, or reform. A charismatic leader could channelize the ferment and suggest pathways to action. In the alternative, the society itself may move to undo the wrongs to certain sections. These questions were posed but not satisfactorily answered. The relationship between the inner discontent and the charismatic leaders remained undiscussed. The inner dynamic of the society in this respect was also not explored in depth. There was a consensus that mobilization played a key role in transforming doctrinal dissent into active movements of protest and reform. We shall have to explore further the mechanics of mobilization. What are the symbols that unify people to articulate their felt wants and to act in a concerted manner for their fulfilment? What are the basic appeals that activate this mobilization towards the desired objective? Some of the symbols and appeals have been identified. The nativism syndrome is one example. It draws its symbols and appeals from the past and emphasizes that salvation of contemporary society lies in a return to authentic and genuine tradition. Another syndrome has been called vitalism, which emphasizes that certain aspects of culture need to be vitalized, others are to be discarded. Many more such factors will have to be identified and we shall also have to consider how they motivate people into action.

Mobilization by itself is not enough; it is to be followed up by a definite strategy of action. The different components of these strategies must be identified. Language, it was pointed out, has a role to play. All movements of dissent, protest, and reform adopt less standardized regional and folk languages in place of the standardized classical language. The idiom of language and the idiom of action are inter-related. Both symbol systems and verbal forms are manipulated to legitimize the new goals of social action. Legitimation, however, is a much wider social process. The entire society may not accept either the goals or the means as legitimate. But their acceptance by a small but articulate collectivity is often enough to begin a movement. As it spreads,

larger sections of the society come to recognize its legitimacy. We have had some useful discussion on this theme, but the legitimation process needs to be examined more fully.

Finally, we discussed the question of penalties. All movements are aimed at certain benefits ultimately, but the achievement of the latter involves some injuries, sufferings, and punishments. How does a protest or reform group estimate the costs and the benefits? In a precarious culture of poverty it is quite possible for some to hang on to the small advantages they already have. We need to explore the inner dynamic of these movements—the direct and indirect, the visible and invisible pressures which shape and guide them. The hierarchy of penalties also needs a probe. This can best be done when we try to develop the biographies of such movements. In doing so we have not only to examine the evolution and continuity of a movement but also the goal transfers in its growth. We shall have to watch out for subtle shifts in meaning. We should carefully note if they have any encounters with the established vested interests and look for the emergence of new vested interests that give rise to schisms. It is equally essential to watch for compromises in the processes before evaluating the final outcome of the movements. I think we shall be well-advised to look also for compromise and accommodation between the vested interests of tradition and the vested interests of revolt.

In our lively interchange of ideas we have raised more problems than we have solved. This has not disappointed me. Raising the right questions is an essential step towards their solution. I think our deliberations have definitely helped us to sharpen our analytical tools which should now lead us to a deeper, more meaningful, and more realistic understanding of Indian society as a structure and as a process.

Participants

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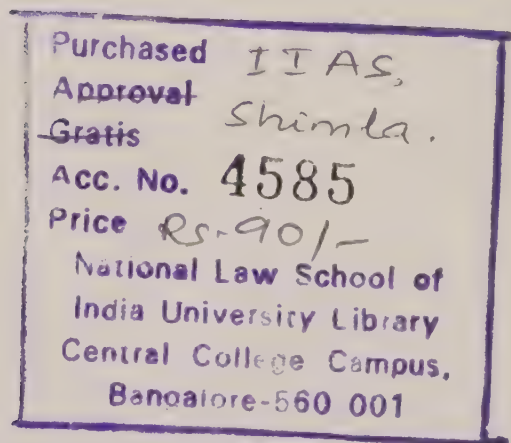
of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study and Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow. He is now Director of the Anthropological Survey of India.

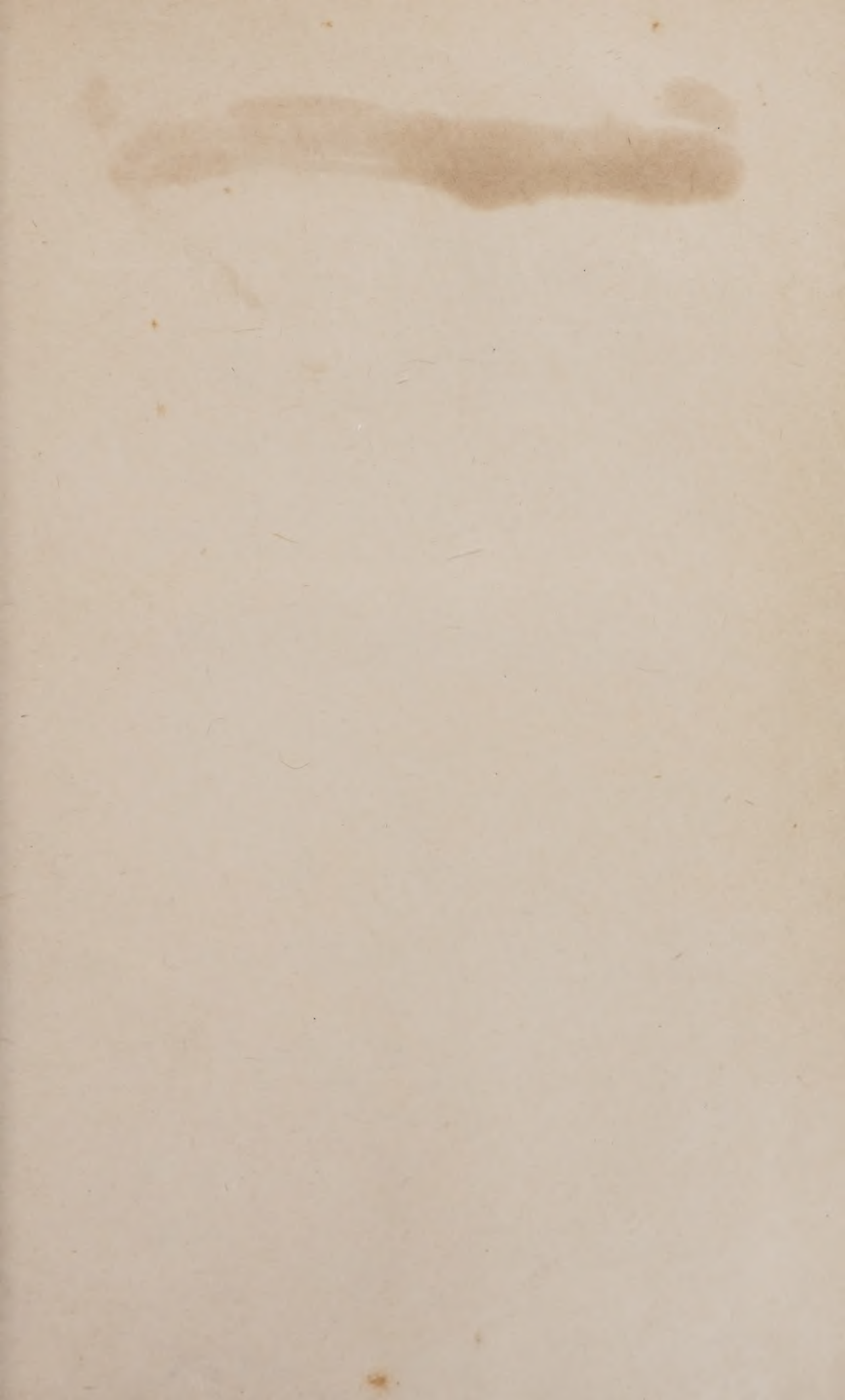
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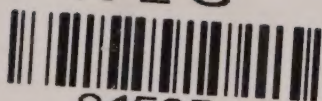
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